

AMONG THE MALAGASY

AN UNCONVENTIONAL RECORD
OF MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE



J. A. HOULDER

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AMONG THE MALAGASY



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J. A. AND S. HOULDER.

AMONG THE MALAGASY

AN UNCONVENTIONAL RECORD
OF MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE

BY

J. A. HOULDER

LATE OF MADAGASCAR

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PREFACE

MUCH has been written descriptive of Madagascar and the Malagasy, to say nothing of the numerous published accounts of the altered condition of affairs brought about by the French conquest. The accompanying pages are only partially concerned with the former, and not at all with the latter. They are mainly a record of missionary life and experience in the "Great African Island" when the land was ruled by Ràinilàri-vòny, its all-powerful Prime Minister, with occasional references to a few of the more public events which took place during that period. As such, the Author is not without hope that they will afford pleasure to the reader and quicken interest in the wonderful work of God still going on amongst the people. For most of the photographs he is indebted to Mr. John Parrett, formerly of Madagascar, and for the original drawings to Mr. George Soper, a well-known black-and-white artist.

J. A. HOULDER.

FOREWORD

THOSE who knew Madagascar five-and-twenty or thirty years ago will, I feel confident, greatly enjoy the book, while a larger circle of readers will find graphic, racy and interesting descriptions of what the island was under Hova domination. The details respecting Malagasy customs, superstitions, national characteristics and advance in civilization, the records of extensive travel, privations, family troubles and Christian work carried on under great difficulties, the Author's experiences with "all sorts and conditions of men" will excite interest, provoke a smile, and at the same time awaken much sympathy; for the missionary career here depicted had a truly pathetic side. It was marked by disappointments, frequent changes, serious breakdowns in health, disruption of work and domestic affliction.

My heartiest good wishes and commendation go with the volume.

GEORGE COUSINS,

Late Joint Foreign Secretary of the
L.M.S., and formerly a missionary
of the Society in Madagascar.

WORTHING, SUSSEX,
August 14th, 1911.

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CHAPTER I

TO ANTANÀNARÏVO

THERE is no forgetting some of the incidents of the first voyage my wife and I made to the great African island. On April 1, 1871, we went down to Gravesend and joined the good ship *Sea Breeze*, bound for Mauritius, commanded by Captain Harry, with a crew of upwards of a dozen men. Our fellow voyagers were to be the other members of our own party—Mr. and Mrs. Brockway and Mr. and Mrs. Stribling of the London Missionary Society, and Mr. and Mrs. Clark, Miss Baker and Mr. W. Johnson of the Friends Foreign Missionary Association, several children and a few other passengers.

We ourselves were glad enough to get on board, myself perhaps especially. The closing up of my college course, the ordination at Paddington Chapel, London (in which the veteran missionaries, Dr. R. Moffat and the Rev. W. Ellis had taken part), my marriage with Susannah, daughter of the Rev. John Addyman, of Dewsbury, who long before had been a pioneer Methodist missionary in Canada, the buying and packing of things for the voyage and abroad, the valedictory service and the personal farewells, had all made one weary and long for a period of rest, at least as much

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rest as could be got at sea. The first thing we did, of course, was to attend to our luggage, and straighten up the cabin ; for all requisites had in those days to be furnished by the passengers and arranged by them to the best of their ability. There was no going into a fine state room, luxuriantly furnished with bedding, washing apparatus, and everything else we needed. We did not sail that day, however, as we had to wait for various members of the crew. But the following morning we were off.

We had a fine trip down the river, and, after a short detention at Deal, were fairly away, having a good view of some of the coast towns as we sailed along. But one is tempted to draw the veil of silence over the next few weeks. To most of us they were weeks of pure wretchedness. Stormy weather came on when we were off Land's End, and consequently a great increase in the pitching and rolling of the ship. The wind howled in the tops, the rain beat upon the deck, and every bit of timber in the vessel seemed to strain and crack. There was no getting a bit of rest day or night. Sickness, moreover, was our constant companion, whether we kept up or lay down ; and we were very far indeed from enjoying

“ A life on the ocean wave,
A home on the rolling deep.”

Occasionally it cleared a little and some of us ventured up, but only to be driven down again by a tempest of wind, and a torrent of rain. But eventually there were signs of a permanent improvement of the weather, the sky cleared and the sun shone out splendidly, and even the mountainous seas went down. We had left the dreaded Bay of Biscay behind us and were getting

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into calmer waters. How we enjoyed the change, walking up and down the deck, or sitting about basking in the sunlight, watching the sailors at their work and hearing them sing their various ditties, such as "Blow, boys, blow" or "Cheery boys," as they tugged away at the ropes, for the time had not yet come for more serious things.

But soon we had to think of them in earnest. There were many weeks before us ere we could reach the end of our voyage and leave the ship, and in the meantime we felt bound to make the best use of the opportunities that would be given us to get on with the study of the language in which we should have to teach and preach. Moreover, there were the people on board amongst whom our lot had been cast, and there was something, perhaps, that we could do for them. So we arranged daily classes for ourselves, and with the captain's permission, Sabbath services for our fellow passengers and the ship's company, or as many of them as might be free and willing to attend. And very enjoyable times these latter were, whether they were held in the saloon on rainy or cloudy days or upon the deck with the sun shining over us and not a drop of rain to fear.

As the good ship got further south, the fine weather got finer and the calm seas more calm, until we glided into the quarter called the Doldrums, when she scarcely moved at all. This gave us many opportunities of observing the beauty and abundance of life in the tropical seas by day, and the glory of the phosphorescence seen in the water by night. One day the captain gave a few of us a rare treat. He had a boat lowered and permitted us to go turtle catching under the guidance of the chief officer. It was a very exciting

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business. Though turtles were plentiful and we could see many floating motionless on the water, we found it exceedingly difficult to catch them. We would be as silent as the grave, and approach little by little with scarcely a movement of the oars, yet when the boat got up to the creature and the sailor stood up in the bows with his arms extended to grasp it, the expected capture would somehow or other be alarmed and sink quickly beneath the surface. So, with the exception of one or two small ones not quite so knowing as their seniors, we caught nothing.

The day was not to close, however, without a still more exciting adventure. The sea was swarming with sharks and the sailors determined to have one. So after the boat was drawn up and secured on the davits, a good stout line was baited with lumps of pork and cast over the stern. For a time, although the sharks swam round and round it, none dared to make the venture of a bite. At last one big hungry fellow made a rush, and lo, he was fast! What a cheer went up from fishers and spectators alike. But the question was, how to get him on board, a somewhat difficult and dangerous operation. The line would hold—they were sure of that—but then the hook might not, and part of the shark's jaw might be torn away in the struggle, and, further, there was the possibility of someone getting a nasty bite if they should pull the creature over the bulwarks. Great care was, therefore, necessary.

The fish was not pulled in at once; a noose was first made, then the rope was made taut and the noose was slipped over the captive's tail, and by pulling firmly on both ropes the sailors got it over the taffrail and on to

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the deck. Flop! "Look out!" and a general stampede took place, all scrambling away together. Too late, however, for one poor fellow who had his leg horribly bitten. It was duly washed and bound up, but the wound gave the man agonizing pain and did not heal up for many a day. As for the shark, it was speedily despatched by a harpoon and marling spikes, and afterwards partially eaten by the sailors.

In a few more days we crossed the line, and it goes without saying that the sailors took full advantage of their opportunity to put us through the amusing but uncomfortable and disagreeable ceremonies usually connected with that event. These, however, one cannot stay to describe.

We had little of entertainment during the rest of the voyage. One of our number fell seriously ill, and gave us all plenty of anxiety for nearly six weeks, during which period she never left her bed. It was no other than my dear wife. She had been fairly well hitherto, and had entered eagerly and whole-heartedly into every effort made to promote the comfort and happiness of others; but now her genial presence was no longer felt and her merry laugh no more heard. She lay helpless in the cabin, and everyone on board seemed to give her their silent sympathy. They could not have been kinder, neither passengers nor crew; and one of the officers, the chief mate, was good enough to give up his cabin that opened on to the main deck, that the patient might have a chance of getting more air. The worst of it was there was no doctor in the company, and no other who thoroughly understood the case; and the danger came from the multiplicity of counsellors who wanted to render aid. However, with the assistance

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of one or two who had a little knowledge of medicine, and above all the indefatigable nursing of her friend, Miss Hounslow, who was just like a sister to her, a slow recovery was made, and by the time the vessel arrived at Mauritius the invalid was almost herself.

A short while before she had nearly suffered the loss of her husband. It was in this way. One stormy night I left the close, stuffy saloon, where we had been too long confined, and where the large oil lamp in the middle was giving forth its usually evil and unpleasant smell, and went up on deck for a change, wrapped up in a top coat and waterproof cloak. The heavens were as black as ink, but lit up at intervals by vivid flashes of lightning. Occasionally the rain came down in torrents and the wind blew suddenly, first from one quarter and then from the other. I chatted at intervals with the second mate, and held on lightly to the framework of the skylight. At length, thinking I had had about enough of it, I let go my hold and turned to go below, but just at that moment, a big sea struck the vessel and, turning her almost topsy turvy, sent me right off my legs. Away I flew to leeward with outstretched arms straight for the angry sea, but ere going over the side my head came into violent collision with the bulwarks and I was knocked back senseless on the deck. They picked me up quickly and carried me below, where the captain applied restoratives and attended to an ugly wound on the cheek. But I was some time in getting right, and the accident made a deep scar which remains to this day. I call it a scar of mercy, because but for its infliction I should not have been alive to tell the tale. I was all the more thankful for my preservation, inasmuch as it was the second time I had

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been saved from death by drowning. The first occurred whilst I was a student, concerning which I remember that the only thought that possessed my mind in going under for the third time was one of regret. Going, going before doing a stroke of real work.

It was on a magnificent morning, the last week of June, that we beat up for Port Louis and hove to for a while at the Bell Buoy to allow the harbour authorities to send their medical officer alongside to give us pratique. How much, whilst waiting, we enjoyed the view of the harbour with its forest of masts and variety of shipping, the clean-looking town with the outline of its principal buildings, but not least, the panorama of the grand mountains with the rugged peak of Peter Botte and the Pouce just before us, and the curiously shaped mass called the Corps de Garde away to the right. We felt as if we could never cease looking. But soon the interview with the port official was over, permission to proceed was given, the waiting tug fastened on, and we were away to our anchorage in the harbour. We were not long in getting ashore. The ship was besieged with crowds of gaily dressed Indian boatmen, and engaging two of them we were rowed quickly to the quay-side.

Pen would fail me to tell of the exquisite beauty of this gem of an island, and of the habits and customs of its inhabitants. Suffice it to say, that after a short stay of ten days, and very pleasant intercourse with friends, we found a small vessel going to Madagascar, and were not long in getting on board.

The *Rio* was what was called a bullocker. She took a miscellaneous cargo over and brought back cattle. She was nearly full up, mainly with rum and sugar,

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when engaged ; but, in order to accommodate the numerous passengers, the upper hold was divided into small temporary cabins. Into these no light or air could enter except from above. Port-holes there were none. The outlook for comfort and convenience, to say nothing of health, was not particularly bright ; but we managed to make a virtue of necessity and do the best we could, especially as the new wooden partitions gave the appearance of cleanliness.

Everything else seemed fairly promising, and even the food was tolerably good, though it was a bit too greasy and served up Creole fashion. So for a few hours we were pretty brisk and cheerful and looked forward to a short, pleasant passage. But then it came on to rain and to blow, and most of us were forced below, where we tried to settle down for the night. Some did so, as they were so dead tired that they would have slept through anything ; but as the night wore on there were sundry exclamations of disgust, until first one, then another, and then the whole party were seen bearing in their arms the bedding that they had brought from the *Sea Breeze* to try their luck on deck. The fact was, the stench from the rum and the sugar and sundry other things was intolerable, the air was stifling, and the place was altogether overrun with rats and black beetles. The latter swarmed everywhere now that the darkness had really come and made themselves into a most loathesome nuisance. The ladies especially felt that they could endure almost anything but that, so they and their partners sought out the most sheltered nooks on deck they could find, and endured hardness until morning.

None of us felt very grand the next day, but happily

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the sea was calm, the wind favourable, and the sun shone gloriously, and we took precautions to have a better night. The skipper being an easy-going fellow and the mate equally obliging, we obtained permission to rig up hammocks and to arrange our bedding in all sorts of sheltered spots and curious places ; and the night being cool and the weather fine and dry, we slept soundly and were quite refreshed when we woke next morning. Two more days and two more nights, however, passed away ere our second voyage was completed. On the morning of the fifth day, July 6, we came in sight of Madagascar. There it was, stretching as far as we could see from north to south, a long low line, fringed with tropical vegetation, extending some distance into the interior, whilst the lofty mountains, tier on tier, formed a dim dark background. But although apparently so near, we were some time beating up to the roadstead and entering the passage between the coral reefs. At length we had reached our destination in safety.

What a contrast it was to our arrival at the harbour of St. Louis. There was no beautiful town to look at, no convenient quays to land at, no forest of masts flying the flags of all nations, and no numerous boats flitting to and fro with strong Indians, wearing gaudy turbans and parti-coloured raiment ; only a meagre looking town made up apparently of a few small stores, native huts and go-downs, just one or two tiny vessels in the roadstead, and no boats about anywhere, and here leisurely approaching the ship was the official shaky canoe with a couple of solemn-looking native officers holding on one behind the other in the stern.

We were not long in getting ashore, and, as we

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landed, were witnesses of what was then a very common spectacle. It appears that the authorities were anxious to discourage as far as possible the sale of rum, owing to its demoralizing and destructive effect upon the people. Being forced by foreigners to permit its entry into the country, they had to content themselves with levying a 10 per cent. duty, which was taken in kind; and accordingly instructions had been given to roll every tenth barrel down to the beach and pour its contents into the sea. The process was going on as we landed and was producing, as it usually did, pandemonium!

What a sight it was! Four soldiers in undress uniform, broad brimmed straw hats, loins girded up and bare legs, half in and half out of the water; two holding the barrel bung downwards, and the other two trying to keep off the crowd of rapsallions, intent on catching some of the precious liquid with bottles, jars, basins, old fruit and jam tins, and even empty sardine boxes and what not, and all hustling, jostling and fighting one another to get the first fill and the first drink amidst an awful clamour of contending voices. How they pushed to and fro, and bawled and shouted, especially when they succeeded in getting something to pour down their throats, though that something was a vile compound of rum and salt water.

As might have been expected we looked on with disgust as well as astonishment, and were not sorry to leave them to it and follow our guide up to the house of the Society's agents—Messrs. Proctor Brothers. It was here we had our first repast and heard of arrangements made for our reception and journey up-country. As we were such a large party, it was, of course, impossible to entertain and provide accommodation for us

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all in the house or even in the warehouses. Some of us had to be accommodated elsewhere, and my wife and I were relegated to a three-storeyed empty house with a very dilapidated shingle roof which let in plenty of rain, only one room on the ground floor being habitable. There was nothing else, as the enterprising people of the town had not then begun to erect grand hotels and to cater for the wants of strangers. Happily in the course of the day we were able to get from the ship our mattresses and bedding, our deck chairs and cabin chairs, and our hand basins and other washing apparatus, and these with a long rough table, the only original article in the place, made it appear something like a human habitation. Taught by experience, we secured a lamp and made our preparations before the darkness came on. But there was not much to be done. We had merely to spread our mattresses, one on the table and another on the floor, to be occupied by my wife and myself respectively, and then when the supper had been eaten to settle down.

Yes, we came in and duly laid ourselves down, but as for settling we could not ; what with the events of the day and the strangeness of the place, and the oddity of our position we could not sleep, and then when weariness did begin to induce a little slumber we were awakened by the biting of the mosquitoes and the unwelcome sound of rats. It was all very well, or fairly well, for madam. She, being on the table, could only hear the rushing and the squeaking ; but it was a good deal worse for me down there underneath. I could not only hear but feel, for now and again, when all was still, they ran about and carried on a game of investigation all over me. How I managed to keep

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quiet and remain on guard all those hours I do not know. I was glad enough when the morning light peeped in through the many interstices of the walls, and sent the creatures to their holes.

Now I suppose I ought to attempt an adequate description of the place to which we had come, and then go on to give full details of the journey thence to the capital. But I am afraid I can do neither. Both have so often been done, and far better than I could manage it. Besides I want to get on ; there is so much to be said about other things. Still, we must linger a little on the way ; and first a word or two about the service in the native chapel on the Sunday. The building itself was nothing, only a big rough-looking place made up of rushes, sticks and leaves ; but the people in their clean white robes seemed devout, and they certainly listened patiently to the preaching and joined heartily in the singing. We learned afterwards that the hymn that went best and that they appeared to enjoy most was that sung to the tune of—"Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning," which may be freely translated thus—

"Jesus my Saviour, the truest of Shepherds,
Bring me safe back that I may follow Thee ;
Sheep that oft wanders far off from green pastures,
Keep me from wandering for ever from Thee."

The language sounded soft and sweet enough. It was, however, little yet that we could understand either of preaching or singing, notwithstanding our lessons on board ship ; but we came away with the impression that the religion represented by it was anything but a sham.

We now devoted ourselves to preparations for the

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journey up-country, and in a few days we were ready. But what shall we say about the mode of travelling in Madagascar at that time. Roads there were none, and wheeled vehicles did not exist. Everyone went by palanquin, or *flanjàna* as it was called, a short seat or long basket fixed between two poles, the former for a gentleman and the latter for a lady. A number of these had been sent down for the use of the party which were fairly convenient and comfortable for riding, but our two were quite the reverse. Mine had no sunken seat, only a strip of rough hempen cloth stretched across the two poles, and the thinnest bars of iron to keep them apart, whilst that allotted to Mrs. Houlder was two-thirds the length it should have been. Now a shortened basket thing would have been all right for a native princess, accustomed to sit in native fashion, but it was all wrong for her foreign sister who wanted more freedom for her lower limbs during the journey of about two hundred miles ; so I had to turn to and lengthen it to the best of my ability. The change did not improve the appearance of the conveyance, but it answered its purpose well enough and on our arrival at the capital was set aside for a new one. As to my own carriage, one of the irons broke before we got very far, and do what I could I was not able to keep the poles sufficiently wide apart, and my hips suffered accordingly.

Because of the difficulty of getting sufficient food and accommodation on the road, the travellers divided themselves into three parties. Ours was the last and was composed of Mr. and Mrs. Brockway and child, Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, who had joined us at Mauritius, and our two selves. This was more than large enough, as we had between us one hundred and twenty-eight men—

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fifty to carry the palanquins and the rest for the luggage, stretchers, beds, pots, pans, and all the paraphernalia of a traveller's outfit, which, when it could be managed conveniently, were done up into parcels and tied to both ends of the carrying pole.

We started on July 16, and in two days reached Andòvorànto, and the next morning were off in a couple of large canoes for a twenty miles paddle up the Ihàroka to Maròmby. This place was a fair-sized village with a good space in the centre; but the houses were very small and wretched, and swarming with rats, and it was found expedient for the male members of the party to occupy one house, whilst the ladies held possession of another. Our senior brother had brought out a travelling hammock and was always singing its praises, but this night it came to grief. He had tied it, as he thought, securely to the frame of the rush and wooden house and to the lintel of the doorway, and about midnight was sleeping the sleep of the just. But I was awakened by the creak, creak, creaking sound which continued for some minutes, when crash! down came the thing bringing its wooden supports on both sides away and letting our friend down with a whack on to the floor. Happily the mischief stayed there and the flimsy structure of a house was not brought down about our ears. That was the end of the hammock for the time being.

The next stage of the journey, up and down the forest-clad mountains, along giddy precipices, and through some of the broader valleys, where marsh and mud abounded, and where rain occasionally poured in torrents, was a far more difficult business. The tracks were simply awful, and the difficulty of getting over

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them immense. It was here that both our palanquins gave way, the flimsy bar that separated the two poles of mine breaking, and the end of Mrs. Houlder's, where it had been lengthened, wearing all out. We patched them up as best we could, but we suffered a martyrdom from them all the rest of the way.

In two more days we reached Mòramànga, a considerable place on the western edge of the great forest, where there were a number of good-sized houses, and a large market which enabled us to supply well our wants, and give the men a substantial present of beef.

While we were at breakfast the next morning, there was a cry of "Foreigner! foreigner!" and lifting up our eyes we beheld him on his palanquin, being rapidly carried towards us. He proved to be the Rev. George Cousins who had come to meet us and escort us the rest of our journey to the capital. His presence and help were heartily welcomed, and we were not long before we were on our way.

That night after going over the great plain, making the passage of the Mangòro, climbing the great hill Ifòdy, and having our midday meal at the village at its base, we stayed at Ambòdinangàvo—the foot of Angàvo—on the other side of the valley, but further south. I cannot say we slept there, for not one of us got a wink. The place was filthy in the extreme, and the rats awful. The ladies had a house to themselves, as at Bèforona, and they sat up in turns all night trying to protect themselves. The roof of the house was thatched thickly with hèrana, a sort of papyrus reed doubled over and threaded on strips of cane. In this the rodents found refuge, living there securely by day and coming out on the prowl at night, eating up

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whatever they could find, rushing and running all over the place, constantly calling one another in gladness, when not actually fighting, and sometimes squeaking for joy in one's very ear, and all this notwithstanding the lanterns brightly burning. There was no gainsaying them. They had to have their fling until the sun shone into every crevice of the place. Then there was a general gathering up of the damaged garments, a throwing away of spoiled food, and out of it quickly. We had had enough of this particular spot in that valley for some time to come. But what a climb it was up the steep mountain! It was really a wonder how the men got up at all with their heavy load. We made it as easy for them as we could by walking now and then, and tired ourselves out thereby. The sight from the top was glorious and we would fain have lingered to "view the landscape o'er," but time pressed and we pushed on through the upper forest.

We got through it in an hour or two. Then away for our last resting place, Ambàtovòry, where we found a comfortable cottage built by Mr. J. Parrett of the L.M.S., and kindly placed by him at the disposal of way-worn travellers, such as ourselves. After a good supper thoroughly well enjoyed, we retired early and slept soundly for many hours. Accordingly we were all the better prepared for the end of our pilgrimage and the excitement of our reception and entrance into the capital, the heavenly city, for thus we should regard it after the toils and hardships of the way.

Two hours' ride on the following morning brought us within view of Antanànarìvo, the goal for which we had been aiming for the last twelve days. There it



THE OLD BROAD GATEWAY, ANTANANARIVO.

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was, shining in the sun, with its centre crowned with the royal palace and the houses of the great men all around it ; whilst at the southern end was the spire of one church and at the northern end the tower of another, giving promise, as we thought, of the brighter days yet to be.

As we got near the city we were met by the friends who had preceded us, and almost all the members of the mission, with a large number of native adherents. These gave us a hearty welcome, and made our hearts right glad as they chatted with us on all sorts of topics whilst escorting us into the city. Here we were led separate ways to the homes of those who had generously offered to receive and entertain us for the nonce. Our host was the Rev. C. F. Moss, who was living at Fàravòhitra with his little son, his esteemed wife having unhappily passed away only a few months before. There we rested on the Sabbath, and, after receiving our baggage and settling with the men on the Monday, spent the next few days in making the acquaintance of friends, looking round the city, and endeavouring to realize the general state of affairs.

Beautiful for elevation, the joy of all its inhabitants, was Antanànarivo, the city of the great Queen. Built upon a hill nearly a couple of miles long, and from a quarter to three-quarters broad, it is a conspicuous object for miles round ; its lofty palace with its eagle-topped roof being visible some distance to the eastward and far away to the westward. Antanànarivo, though beautiful for elevation, is not by any means convenient for situation. It is in the centre of a dense population, scattered about in large villages all around, and was all right enough as a position for a local capital, but the

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fact of its being built upon a rough steep hill some five hundred feet high rendered it altogether unsuitable for the accommodation of the multitudes who crowded within it. Regular streets at that time did not exist ; their formation, like a good many things in this primitive land, was left entirely to chance and the exigencies of the natural position, and the consequence was they were extremely inconvenient and dangerous for the people who were compelled to use them. A sort of irregular thoroughfare went through the city from north to south with an offshoot east and another west, and these were tolerably, but only tolerably, clear. All besides were narrow alleys that twisted and turned in every direction, broadening out, but much more often narrowing in, as the residents of the houses on either side thought proper. It was curious to see how the main tracks were constantly being encroached upon, walls advanced here and houses built forward there, until there was scarcely room to squeeze oneself along ; and as for a palanquin, or two persons walking abreast, the thing was impossible. In some of these byways, and now and then in the highways, travellers were obliged to climb as the paths were too steep for walking. Then, when the tropical rains came, as come they do with a vengeance, these tracks were roaring torrents, and people got along them at their peril.

The Government occasionally made spasmodic attempts at repairs, but in the most primitive and ridiculous fashion. Hundreds of men were sent out, to make the crooked paths straight and the rough places smooth, that the sacred person of Her Majesty might not come to grief or her scarcely less sacred property sustain injury. It was often highly amusing to see

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the poor fellows at work. Their only concern was to do as little as possible, and to do that little in as long a time as they could. They had to get through the day somehow, and they generally managed to get through it without killing themselves with much labour. They brought clods and stones and small baskets of earth which they dug out from the sides of the roads, and threw them into deep holes in the centre, caring not a jot whether they remained there or were washed out again by the next rains.

If the streets of Antanànarivo were curious, the houses were still more so, both as regards their position and their structure. They were situated in all sorts of impossible places, accessible by all sorts of impossible ways, and built in all sorts of impossible styles. It is quite useless to attempt to describe them. Suffice it to say, that there being no town surveyor and no penalties attached to offences against safety or taste, the houses were as various as the shape and size and the nature of the land on which they stood, and the different social position and wealth and inclination of their respective proprietors could make them. They agreed, however, in this that all the poorer ones had their doors and windows facing to the west, and all the more pretentious as many apertures opening as many ways as possible. But a great change was coming, mainly arising from the structure of churches and schools and private residences for the accommodation of foreigners.

The Hovas of the interior, who represent the larger portion of the inhabitants, are an interesting people. They are generally acknowledged to be of Malay origin, and in their persons, their language and their modes of life they undoubtedly manifest many of the

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characteristics of an Eastern race. Their intellectual attainments are not to be by any means despised, whilst they are born traders and clever craftsmen.

Foreigners have often been surprised at the quality of the work they turn out ; especially when they have happened to catch a glimpse at the rude tools with which it has been done. In the olden days there was much of the work finished by the tinsmiths, ironsmiths, carpenters, bricklayers, and masons that was of the roughest and most elementary description ; but, on the other hand, there was some of it that would have done credit to the artisans of any civilized country ; and one had only to look at the handsome churches and substantial houses of the city of Antanànarivo, and to examine the native-made fittings and furniture inside them, to coincide heartily with the statement.

The tailors and shoemakers, the printers and bookbinders, again, gave fair evidence of their ability ; whilst the pretty articles of jewellery ingeniously made by the silversmiths and the goldsmiths, the handsome silk robes woven by the weavers, and the extremely delicate pieces of lace worked by the embroiderers, were the admiration of all who handled them. True, the people learned these arts from foreigners ; but they learned them quickly, and they have shown an aptitude for their acquirement which is, to say the least, somewhat remarkable. They may not have much imagination and inventive power ; but it must be confessed that, when they exhibit such wonderful imitative skill and dexterity, there is considerable hope for the development of their mechanical genius.

The ordinary dress of the common people was, on our arrival, simple enough. A cloth round the loins, and

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a rough kind of blouse for the males, and a sort of close fitting bodice and loose skirt for the females, and a few yards of white cotton or coloured print called a lamba, to cover over the figure of both sexes, that is about all, if we except the inevitable straw hat worn by the men and occasionally by the women. These articles of attire, improved of course with the wealth of the wearers, were sometimes supplemented by more or less comfortable under-clothing. On some might have been seen splendid silk lambas or robes of divers colours, and also elaborately embroidered tunics and skirts. The latter often looked elegant and pretty enough, and the former appeared neat and tidy, and were worn in a very graceful and becoming manner.

As to the government of the country, the Queen was, of course, the nominal head of the country, but Ràini-làiarivòny, her Prime Minister, was actually the ruler. He rose to power in a very remarkable way, and his subsequent history was no less remarkable. From comparative poverty and obscurity he became one of the generals of the old persecuting Queen. In 1863, he and his brother, who was then his superior, were at the head of the party which made history by removing the ill-fated and unfortunate Radama II., and placing his Queen, Rasohèrina, on the throne. The following year he became Prime Minister in the room of his brother, who was banished to the south for life. At the death of Rasohèrina, he favoured the accession of Ramoma, her cousin, under the title of Ranavàlona II. A few months afterwards he was united to her in marriage, having divorced for the purpose his faithful wife, the mother of his sixteen children.

This step can only be defended on Machiavellian

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principles, and the less that is said of it the better. In justice to the man, however, who felt himself compelled by the force of political circumstances to take it, it must be acknowledged that he was otherwise invariably kind to the mother of his children, and much too kind to the children themselves ; whilst no one with whom we are acquainted has ever expressed a doubt as to the fidelity of Rainilàiarivòny to his royal consort. The same must be said in regard to the sovereign whom he raised to the throne, and likewise married in 1883.

Under the rule of his strong personality, as under that of his predecessors, no direct taxes, or next to none, were levied. In lieu thereof came fànompòana, or compulsory unrequited service, such as a slave renders to his master, a very onerous duty and a very questionable exchange.

Fànompòana was the genius of the native government, and it seemed to be its principal end. The rulers were most concerned, not with the promotion of the prosperity and happiness of the people, but with the proper carrying on of service for the Queen. That must be done whatever else was left undone. The whole of a native's life was taken up with doing fànompòana of one sort and another. It confronted him wherever he might be, imperiously demanding attention, and daring him at his peril to neglect it. Anything in the nature of service was fànompòana, from the superintendence of all the arrangements of Her Majesty's household down to the cleaning of her royal shoes ; from presiding over the council of Government, or the ruling of a province, to the shouldering of a musket in war, and the carrying of a stone or lump of earth in peace. Any and every labour could be exacted

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at any and every time at her sovereign will and pleasure.

Fànompòana for the Government, whether civil or military, was bad enough ; but it was made a hundred times worse by the fact that the system involved, not only a multitude of petty oppressions and exactions by the persons duly appointed to carry it out, but also the fànompòaning of one another. The theory was that this unrequited service was rendered to the Queen, but unfortunately it did not end with service to royalty. The organization requisite for getting work done for Her Majesty was a system of subordination, by means of which any person who had authority over another could make that other work for his own benefit, and the inevitable result was that there was infinitely more fànompòana done for private individuals than there was for the Government. The people's lives were often made a perfect misery to them. The greatest oppressed the great, and the great the less ; whilst the less again ground the lesser, and the lesser the least. To alter and enlarge a well-known quatrain, it was indeed a case of—

“ Big folks have little folks
To work hard and delight 'em ;
Little folks have lesser folks,
And so *ad infinitum*.
Big folks make little folks
Brains, skill and labour lend 'em ;
Little folks force lesser folks
And soon or late they end 'em.”

With this wretched system of fànompòana rendered by so-called free men there was a still more wretched service rendered by slaves to their owners ; though the lot of the slave was not so atrociously bad as in countries

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like the Southern States of North America, where their labour was employed wholesale on the large cotton estates.

Such is a very brief notice of the Malagasy people in the centre of the island, and the conditions under which they lived. But a word or two before passing on as to the remarkable religious revolution that had taken place amongst them, so many evidences of which we saw around us.

Some fifty years previously a mission had been planted in the capital by the Rev. D. Jones, joined soon after by the Rev. D. Griffiths and some others, including four artisans. Owing largely to the friendship and favour of the King, Radama I., the mission was eminently successful ; so that when he died, eight years afterwards, several hundred Malagasy had become Christians, and some thousands of scholars had passed through the schools, many of whom themselves became teachers. Moreover, the language had been reduced to writing, various elementary books printed, and parts of the Scriptures translated and given to the people.

Then arose great opposition to the spread of the new religion, and ultimately, in 1835, there broke out on the part of the usurping Queen, Ranavàlona I., a great persecution, which lasted a quarter of a century, and during which many natives lost their lives, and many more were deprived of their freedom and their property. Notwithstanding this, however, Christianity was not extinguished, but was kept mysteriously and providentially alive ; and when the persecution ended in 1861 by the death of the persecuting Queen, it was found that the number of its professors was far greater than when it commenced, so mightily had the word of

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God grown and prevailed. Since then, and especially during the reign of Queen Ranavàlona II., who had decreed the burning of the national idols or fetishes in 1869, the number of those professing Christianity or desirous of becoming instructed in its principles had very largely increased ; nearly a quarter of a million indeed were set down as adherents. Apart from the influence then exerted, this great increase had been brought about through the instrumentality of the churches in the capital. These had large districts attached to them into which numerous teachers and preachers had been sent. Moreover, the gospel tidings had spread to other places, and in the southern central part of the island there were a considerable number of believers.

CHAPTER II

SETTLING DOWN

To encourage the native Christians who had recommenced teaching and preaching after the cessation of the persecution, and to evangelize, if possible, the whole island, the Directors of the L.M.S. had sent out, in 1862, a band of missionaries, who were soon afterwards joined by others. These had been labouring for some years with marked success, and now we had arrived to strengthen their hands, and help them to instruct the vast numbers of ignorant people who appeared so eager to be taught the principles and practice of our Lord's religion.

Of the new-comers, Mr. and Mrs. Brockway and Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, and our two selves, were to join the small party at work in the southern field. But there was some doubt as to the place we were to occupy ; and at the committee, which was held a short time after our arrival, it was decided that Mr. Brockway and I should go down to the Betsileo and bring back a report as to the two plans proposed.

Of the journey then taken only one or two incidents can be given. We started on August 23rd, leaving my wife under the hospitable roof of my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Peake, and soon found that we were to have a new experience of travel. In the lowlands, provided one is not forced to stay in a house occupied at the same time

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by its owners and their ordinary lodgers, there is little to disturb and annoy one but the squeak of a rat, the scratching of a hen in the coop, the twitterings of her chicks, and the rush of the wind through the many interstices of the flimsy, airy dwellings. It is far different, however, in the highlands, where the winters are often very cold, and keen, chilly blasts cut the traveller through and through. The houses are built of clay and the floors are plastered with mud and cow-dung, and everything is made as warm and snug as possible. These are just the places for dirt, and are veritable happy hunting grounds for the vermin that make sleep well-nigh impossible, and render wakefulness miserable.

I shall never forget one spot on the journey we now took, where our experiences were simply horrible—all the discomforts ever endured under such circumstances seeming to be centred, pressed together and intensified through the long hours of a single night. It is graven on my memory with a pen of iron. It was Betàmpona—the place of the broad top—I could fix it on the map at once and almost walk to it blind-fold. It is a few hours north of the sugar-loaf mountain of Ivòtovòrona, just at the edge of the plateau which rises another step a little way beyond, and forms the cold and dreary “desert.”

We had toiled along in the chilly mist for hours, and the men wearily climbed the ridge as the darkness began to fall. Right glad we were to get into the place, though the houses were few and not one of them looked inviting. Unhappily no conflagration had recently occurred to purify the village. All the dwellings were dreadfully knocked about by the stormy weather, and were moreover grimy and sooty with months and

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months of smoky fires and filthy usage. The roofs without a chimney let in the rain from many a hole in the torn and rotten thatch, the doors and windows were dilapidated, the walls were full of cracks and fissures ; and as to the state of affairs inside, one look and whiff was enough. However, it was Hobson's choice. It was very late and rainy, and we were utterly weary ; so we crowded into one of the least objectionable.

A dreadful, evil-smelling hole it was. Opposite the door was the place for the pig—for a highland Malagasy, like a west of Ireland Paddy, always keeps his porker in his own house, and sometimes he puts into it his calf and his sheep. By the side of the sty was a place for the ducks, and on the top was the hen roost and that of her lord ; for as we entered, the old cock eyed us askance and crowed a welcome or a defiance. Near the middle of the remaining part of the house was the hearth, with sundry grimy pots and greasy horn spoons on a wooden frame above it, and overhead was the damaged roof, festooned thickly with sooty cobwebs which threatened to fall with every gust of the now rising wind. By the pigsty was the water pot, and in the north-east corner were a few odds and ends. There was no sign of a bedstead ; but several blacky-brown mats, slung in a corner on two pegs in the wall, were ready for use when the occupiers felt inclined to stretch themselves on the mud floor.

We had tea made, and got the meal over as quickly as possible ; though our attention was constantly taken off by the ominous squeak, squeak of the rats in the corners, the bites of the fleas on our legs, and the occasional fall of a sooty cobweb as a stronger gust of wind shook the roof, and the persistent entrance of

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piggy, who did not quite see the force of being shut out in the cold.

The prospect was not encouraging ; but we decided philosophically to make the best of it, and set to work with our preparations for night. It required some amount of consideration, however, to select the most suitable spots to set up our stretchers, as the accommodation was very limited ; and, to add to our troubles, it came on to rain heavily, and the roof leaked in many places.

At last we placed the stretchers where there seemed least chance of getting wet, and arranged the blankets with extraordinary care, so as not to let them roll off or touch the floor and thus make an easier upward passage for the fleas ; then we finally drove out the pig, as we really did not care for the honour of his company, fastened the door securely, pulled down the blankets, and brushed down our legs so as not to carry any vermin into bed with us. Then we blew out the light and got in ourselves as quickly and as dexterously as possible. But neither was inclined to talk. We were both so dreadfully tired. We lay for some moments in perfect silence. Then we began to feel an itching sensation about our bodies, and we heard several grunting sounds outside the house, and a few squeaking ones inside. A few seconds more and bang went the door, clatter fell the wooden bar we had fixed across it, and in rushed piggy.

Then I, being the younger, got up as carefully as I could, drove out the pig, and refastened the door. There was no getting back again quite so easily, however. On turning to get into bed in the dark I stumbled against the hearth, greased and blackened my hands

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with the pots and framework of grimy wood above it, soiled my linen, and burnt my big toe by treading on the dying embers of the fire. But finding through a lucky chance the matches, I struck a light, and again turned in, leaving this time the candle burning. A few minutes of quiet satisfaction at the repulse of the grunting and squeaking fraternity—for the bolt, I thought, was sufficient to keep off the one and the light to intimidate and silence the other—when crash went the door again, and in rushed the pig with a great grunt of triumph.

“Now, brother,” exclaimed I, “out with him, it’s your turn.”

Now at first my comrade seemed disinclined and made no movement; but as the cold wind blew in at the door, he began to feel somewhat uncomfortable. I saw he was fidgeting about, tucking himself in here and putting the blanket right there. At last he could endure it no longer.

“Get out you brute,” he shouted as he caught hold of a boot and flung it at the culprit’s head. But the animal only grunted and rubbed himself against the corner of the barricaded sty. Then followed sundry other articles in rapid succession from both of us. Some of these random shots struck the cause of all the hubbub, but others went wide of the mark hitting the roof and knocking down the smuts in clouds, and falling amongst the fowls and creating no small amount of consternation. Piggy merely grunted, and when struck did not move an inch. At length, in desperation, we both rose, and, flinging off the clothes, we made one rush to the other end of the house, hit the porker several blows on rump and snout, and made him run

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out once more with a fearful squeal. We then fastened the door more carefully than before, got under the clothes and settled ourselves down again, thinking we had obtained the victory at last. But after a while there came the usual premonitory grunting and scraping and rubbing, though it seemed as if the discomfited animal was really giving up the contest and slowly backing off. He was, however, too much offended and too obstinately pig-headed for that. Yes, he did back away a bit, but only to come forward more determined than ever. Giving one angry snort, he elevated his snout and, rushing with desperation at the closed and bolted door, he rammed it in yet once more.

This decided us. It was we who were conquered. We agreed to let the honours go to the pig and allow him to occupy peacefully his own quarters. So one of us struck a match, relit the candle, shut the door, and got under the sheets again. All this time we had been so occupied with the pig that we had scarcely thought about the rats. But these began to play high jinks, and to scamper round the place, the presence of the lighted candle notwithstanding. The fleas, too, which we had let in by getting in and out from the dirty floor began to worry us fearfully. Then the wind got higher and shook the roof, so that the soot came down like snow and the rain kept drip, drip, dripping on to our stretchers and occasionally on to our faces. Then a drop or two fell on the candle, and out sputtered the light.

That was the signal for a livelier state of affairs. The rats, bold enough before, became far bolder now, and frisked about here, there, and everywhere to their hearts' content, coursing amongst the crockery, rattling

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the pots and pans, chasing each other along the top of the walls and over the cross-beam of the house, and tumbling with a thud on to our very beds.

It is well perhaps in times of trouble and annoyance to have a sense of humour, and this now came to my aid. It all seemed so ridiculous, and I forgot my own affliction in watching how my fellow traveller endured his. He did his best, but to little purpose. Sleep he could not. I can see him now, as I think of it, sitting up on his stretcher, when the candle was once more relit, peering here and there into his linen—for he was very short-sighted—and making frantic efforts to catch his diminutive tormentors. At length he gave it up in despair and soon after both of us fell from utter weariness into a troubled sleep.

How long we remained unconscious of all that went on around us I know not. But when we appeared to be just dropping off, the fowls began to show signs of wakefulness and to shake themselves and dress their feathers; the chickens twittered and rustled about, the pig grunted, and the impudent cock that had greeted us so knowingly suddenly gave a loud crow.

After this, there was no more sleep. So we both got up, lit another candle and endured as best we could till the morning's light dawned in upon us. An examination disclosed the fact that we were bitten all over. Besides this, our faces were well-nigh as black as a sweep's where the smuts and sooty cobwebs had fallen, and which we had made worse by rubbing. The bed-clothes, too, were nearly as bad, and as we had not then learned the trick of placing our wearing apparel and other destroyable articles in tin boxes before retiring for the night, the rats had eaten a thoroughfare through

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my friend's hat, appropriated a piece out of one of my boots, and irretrievably damaged my nether garment, to say nothing about the spoiling of sundry provisions.

Yes, we had reason to remember Betàmpona, and that is why I have been tempted to dwell at length upon our visit to that place. We had many somewhat similar experiences afterwards—the particulars of which must be taken for granted—but never one exactly like this ; and so we pass on. But the fact is worth recording that the many discomforts at night and the consequent want of proper rest were often the worst part of travel in Madagascar. We could put up with a long journey in the blazing sun, the chilly rides in the cold winter's mist, the occasional drenchings in the furious storms, the long and weary pulls up hills, the hard struggles through the forests and the bush, and the dangerous passage of the bogs and the rivers, if there was only the prospect of a night of real rest afterwards ; but when we were robbed of that there was every chance of a breakdown and often of a very serious illness.

Before crossing the Mania we had an adventure with a beautifully marked snake, some six feet long, which was harmlessly sunning itself across the path. Of course I must needs get down to secure it. Catching it alive seemed out of the question. So I tried to capture the creature dead, with the view of taking back a pickled specimen. I had only the umbrella I was carrying, and struck it with that. The reptile was not touched, as the weapon did not bend like a pliable piece of stick or cane. The point touched the ground but the snake glided underneath, and began wriggling away. I struck at it again, but this time the

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creature raised its head in anger, darted like lightning at the umbrella and commenced to wriggle rapidly up it towards the handle held by my naked hand. The men looked on in awe, and I with something like terror; for it must be confessed that I was horribly frightened. But there was no time to exhibit fear. Flinging my arm out vigorously, before the snake had completed the ascent to my wrist, I threw it far from me; and before it could recover from the shock, and while it lay at full length on the ground, I rushed up and sealed its fate by a few rapid and well directed blows.

This reminds me of the many wanderers from our own country often met with abroad, some of whom come from very respectable families. The one I am now thinking of was the second son of a Devonshire squire, who, being of a restless spirit, had gone out to see the world. Whilst staying with us for a time as a guest, he told of various adventures he had had, and especially with snakes. It was a trick of his when a lad at school to suddenly pull out a snake from his pocket and let it go, to the consternation of his school fellows, the annoyance of the master, and the cessation of all lessons.

When in California amongst the miners, he was called "Rattlesnake Jemmy" because of his dexterity in capturing and rendering harmless these dangerous creatures. His plan was to tease and irritate the snake; to dodge aside when it made its spring; and then, as it was lying stretched full length on the ground, to seize it by the tail before it could recover, swing it round and round several times just as I have seen natives do, and then despatch it quickly by dashing its head on the ground.



AT CLOSE QUARTERS WITH THE SNAKE.

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Ere reaching Ambòsitra we had a difficulty with the men. They were paid so much a day, and were not in a particular hurry to get on. Now we had been provided with a time-table by a previous traveller on the route we were taking, and wanted to keep to it as nearly as possible ; but the men, both the bearers and the carriers of luggage, did not care anything about time, and, wanting one day in which to take it easy, refused to go on. We expostulated and entreated to the best of our ability, but all to no purpose. So at last we decided to make a move ourselves, feeling assured that they would follow. After walking about a mile, we looked back and saw no signs of them. We waited and waited and waited. There were still no signs of the malingerers ; and finally we had to give it up, and had the mortification of marching back again and meeting their triumphant looks as best we could. We had, however, learned our lesson, though it was some time before we could manage fairly successfully a company of men like these.

We reached Ambòsitra on the fifth day, and occupied one or two more in gaining information there and in the villages around. We soon saw what an eligible spot it was for the establishment of a station, as it appeared healthy, and there were plenty of people round about, many of whom were eager for the presence of a missionary. Ambòsitra itself was alive with religious excitement and expectation, and everybody seemed anxious to take part in the service. There was a lad who preached to us quite glibly on 2 Tim. ii. 6, " The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." We could not get an intelligent idea of what he said ; but there was no mistake about his

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assurance and facility of speech, and we left the town feeling that Madagascar was not wanting in youthful prodigies.

Our next stopping place was Anjomà, where we took up our abode in the church, thankful for the shelter it afforded and the chance it gave of a good night's sleep. It was a great spacious building with make-shift windows and doors, a well-worn holey grass roof, and plenty of spaces in the walls, through which the wind came freely. We set up our stretchers on the large platform, over which were written the words, "Christ is the Master of this house," and we felt, as we settled ourselves down for the night, that, as there was no prophet's chamber attached, He would not deny His servants the opportunity the place afforded for the rest and sleep they needed. No, we had no qualms of conscience in the matter ; and many a time afterward, in our wanderings up and down the country, where the houses were too filthy and too unhealthy to inhabit, we availed ourselves of the same privilege, to our own satisfaction and comfort, and probably also to the general advancement of the cause.

A day and a half further on brought us to Fianà-rantsôa, the capital of the Bètsilèo country ; and then, after spending a few days with the brethren there, we went on to Ambòhimandròso, the proposed alternative mission station to Ambòsitra. This we found to be a most important place—the residence of a governor, the centre of a large population, and the gate, as it were, to the numerous tribes to the south as yet untouched by the Gospel. I had no hesitation, therefore, in coming to the conclusion that, notwithstanding the advantages of the first district we had examined, this town and its

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neighbourhood should have the greater claim on our consideration.

We had now to hasten northwards, though we would have fain lingered, enjoying the kind hospitality of our friends and the pleasant intercourse with them our visit afforded. We had seen much of the strange country through which we had passed, of the many towns and villages scattered picturesquely up and down the land, of the habits and customs of the people who dwelt therein, and of the good work that had been begun amongst them ; and, were this my present object, much could be written descriptive of all this. But I must leave it and simply say that, after a comparatively uneventful return journey, we reached Antanànarivo just twenty-five days after starting out. In due course our respective reports were presented to the committee, and then referred home for the consideration of the directors. That, of course, meant waiting in the capital till the reply came. So we settled down meanwhile to get on with the study of the language, and to do what work we could.

Setting up house was a great joy to us, especially to Mrs. Houlder. She had been looking forward to it ever since our arrival, and she did her best to make it comfortable and look bright and cheery. The house was only a cottage of three small rooms on the ground floor, and an attic in the roof, approached by an outside flight of steps. There was a shed close by which served as a kitchen, and also a little garden with a grape vine in the enclosure. The place was on the main road leading to the great market, called Zomà, and very near it ; but it was enclosed by high walls on three sides and overlooked the busy plain of Anàlakàly. Not a

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very grand abode certainly, nor likely to prove particularly healthy ; but for a time it was our own home, and for that reason perhaps we were more than content. It was there I think that we spent the happiest period of our residence in the capital ; and it was there, too, that our eldest daughter was born in the first month of the year 1872.

It was not all honey of course. We had our difficulties, as most new-comers had, particularly as regards housekeeping and servants. We started with the idea of making the two or three people we were obliged to have about us very clean and comfortable. But we soon had to take the ordinary course of not troubling much about them ; for the native bedsteads we provided they chopped up for fire-wood, and the washing basins, etc., put for their convenience, they used for dishing up their dinner. As to our own meals we had to take them pretty much as they came, though the service was not over clean, and the cook made some most egregious blunders, *e.g.*, the making of a suet pudding with the suet in a dab in the middle. It is astonishing, however, what a practical woman can do as regards getting things in order, although she cannot have it altogether her own way in a land like this.

It was in the house of a neighbour that a circumstance occurred which illustrates the difficulty of providing properly for one's guests, and arranging everything to their entire satisfaction. We were having "high tea" with a select party of friends—a social custom in which we occasionally indulged. This gave us the more pleasure inasmuch as we were generally free from engagements in the evening, there being then no meetings or services of any kind.

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The fine plump eighteen penny turkey had been carved and served—poultry and all native food was cheap in those days, although everything foreign was correspondingly dear—the tea was being poured out and sent round, when I noticed the lady opposite look severely at her cup, and then pass it on to the house boy, who in Madagascar takes the place of housemaid. This worthy took it away, had it refilled with tea and brought it back again. But whilst he was about it I saw a startled expression appear in the lady's eyes, and then a broad smile pass over her features; and I noticed afterwards that she sat toying with her cup of tea before her and did not touch a drop, occasionally laughing quietly to herself, but maintaining strict silence.

On reaching home I asked her why she thus acted. Then a real hearty laugh came. "I was sitting," she said, "where I could see a little way behind the screen, where the man had carried the cup. He just looked at it, spat on it, then raised the corner of his shirt, rubbed the mark to which I objected, and brought it back again all bright and shining." No, it does not do to look at things too closely and observe too accurately in a land like this, where people's ideas are likely to be occasionally a little too primitive. It should be said, however, that the shirt was the ordinary livery of a native house boy, and that he always wore it at social functions, nicely got up and scrupulously clean, outside his other garments.

But though there was plenty to laugh about in Malagasy customs there was much also that tended to make one weep. They were sometimes so cruel and brutal in their treatment of dumb animals and of one

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another. Take, for instance, the way in which the people when exasperated, dealt with thieves and other offenders. The former were often very dexterous, especially in the matter of stealing money in the market. A native's purse was his loin cloth, which was often a dirty rag. The money—a little lot of broken pieces of a dollar—was carefully rolled up in the end of the rag, which was then tucked tight in the folds. An intending purchaser or an interested spectator, of whom there were always many, would squat in the company around the stall in the crowded market place, and while the chaffering was going on, which was often a long and exciting process, he would occasionally lend himself unconsciously to the artful dexterity of the intending thief. This enterprising gentleman would spread out his own flowing robe, cover that of the other and introduce both hands underneath and immediately set to work. Finding probably the end of the loin cloth dangling down with the little knot of money in it, or dexterously disengaging it, he would cut a slit in the knot with one hand and then gently shake the pieces into the palm of the other, all the while laughing to himself and joining perhaps in the conversation going on. Then he would withdraw both hands and casually rise and saunter off, it might be with a parting word of banter to the seemingly indifferent huckster and his eager intending customer. Then the latter, concluding the bargain, would feel for the wherewithal to pay for the article purchased and find to his dismay that it was gone.

A hue and cry would be immediately raised, setting the whole market in an uproar. The thief sometimes got off scot free. But not infrequently he was recog-

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nized or some one else declared to be guilty. Then it was usually a race for life. The man would start at once, and, urged on by a knowledge of the terrible fate that awaited him, would bound like a madman over stalls, along alleys, and out of the market place with a great crowd of yelling people at his heels.

Poor wretch, he had not generally the ghost of a chance, though he might make for the open country, or the shelter of the house of some friendly foreigner. The howling mob of bloodthirsty pursuers were almost always too quick for him, and the stones they hurled too sharp and heavy. He would be struck first by one missile, then another, and in a little while he would be down to be savagely kicked and stoned and done to death by the infuriated multitude.

That awful rush of a furious and murderous crowd was a sight so horrible that, once seen, it was never forgotten. The worst of it was, the yelling eager multitude was not composed of men only, but of men, women, and even children, all anxious to join in the attack and help to take the life of a fellow creature. As a rule nothing would stop the infuriated people in their endeavour, and woe be to him that attempted it. But though interference was undoubtedly dangerous, it was not human, and certainly not Christian, to stand quietly by and see murder done ; and so now and again a foreigner has ventured at the peril of his life to come to the rescue of the poor hunted creature.

I was one evening reading in the house when a fearful din was heard outside ; hundreds of people were shouting and yelling and rushing past like madmen. Out I went, just as I was, without a hat, slippers on my feet, and spectacles on my nose. The mob pressed

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on with dreadful cries, but stopped a short distance away. Running up I elbowed my way through, and saw on the ground a wounded man being mercilessly treated by the angry and excited crowd. Not knowing then the usual way in which they dealt with persons accused of robbery, I cried—

“What has he done? See, he is sorely hurt. Let us take him to the hospital.”

“Hospital!” exclaimed some of the wretches. “No, no. He’s a thief, and we’ll kill him.”

Then the cowardly attack recommenced in spite of my efforts to prevent it. I snatched the end of the rope, with which the poor man was bound, from the hands of a big burly fellow by my side, who did not at all like it; and in the scuffle that ensued, I soon saw that I could do no good alone. So I burst through the crowd once more, narrowly escaping several blows aimed from behind as I did so, and ran off to get further help. I was not injured; but I had come off badly nevertheless, as I lost my spectacles and one of my slippers. In a very short time I had put on my boots and was back again with one or two helpers; but I was pleased to find that there was no need for any further interference. The man was not killed outright. The short delay had been sufficient to allow the city guards to come up and take possession of him that he might be brought before the judges the next day, if he lived so long.

I was so moved by this shocking event that I ventured to write a short story of the murder of an innocent man in the market, to counteract, as far as possible, this brutal instinct of the people. It was a considerable task, as my knowledge of Malagasy was so

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very limited and imperfect ; but, by the aid of the native teacher who was instructing me in the language, it was finished and published in *Good Words*, our monthly magazine. This had a large circulation in the town, and exercised considerable influence amongst the people. There I left it, and busied myself about other things.

A few months afterwards, however, well on towards ten o'clock one night, we heard the ominous shouting and yelling usually indicative of thief-hunting, and looking out saw numerous lights along the side of the hill and down in the valley, all apparently converging to one spot. There was no remaining in. Taking a stout stick in one hand and a lantern in the other, I ran to the house of my nearest colleague and asked him to go with me to the scene of the disturbance.

Now our friend was a little man ; but he was never lacking in pluck and go. He was just starting himself, similarly equipped. We were down the hill and along the road in a few minutes, when a dreadful, but an intensely interesting, sight presented itself.

Against a high mud wall, such as was seen all over the city, was a poor trembling wretch, bereft of almost every scrap of clothing and bleeding from various wounds ; and there right in front of him, and facing the howling mob of wildly excited people was a tall, stalwart fellow, who was stripped to the waist, and had a big club in his hand. This he raised on high, and was declaring at the moment of our arrival that he would bring it down on the head of the next man who dared to touch the terrified creature behind him. But there was no more need of further single effort. For some reason or other our coming seemed to silence the

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raging crowd, and they meekly suffered us three and a few native helpers to place the endangered man in the midst of us and take him up to the guard-house.

Now for one man to withstand a multitude of enraged and murderously inclined savages like that was hitherto an unheard-of thing amongst the natives. They were too indifferent about the lives of others and too careful of their own. It could only be accounted for surely by the fact that the noble defender of the intended victim was a teacher belonging to the Friends' School—no other than the Malagasy instructor who had put right for me the story of an innocent man. Am I wrong in concluding that the Christianity with which he had come into contact, and which he now professed, was ruling his own conduct, and had enabled him to count not his life dear unto him if so be he might save that of another? I think not. It was one of the evidences of the way in which the humanizing Gospel of Christ was working in the hearts and lives of the people.

Just before the end of the year the native festival of the Fandròana, or the Bath, came round, of the origin of which no one seems to know anything. Two days before the young people amused themselves at dusk by lighting wisps of straw and waving them aloft, whilst, as the darkness increased, fires were seen in the villages around. This was done also on the following day, and during these two days numbers of cattle were driven into the town. Some of these were so fat that they had to be coaxed gently forward, preceded by a gaily dressed company blowing horns and beating drums. The same night the great ceremony took place in the palace, but on this occasion apparently no foreigners were invited. We had to content ourselves with the



LYNCH LAW IN THE CAPITAL: "KILL HIM!"

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knowledge that the Queen had bathed, and that the people might do the same, from the booming of the guns in the palace yard, followed by the firing of those lying flat on the ground at the edge of the precipice at Andohalo in the centre of the city.

The morrow was the great day, however. Then the fattened oxen were killed, and the people were all engaged in sending great lumps of beef to one another. We ourselves had far more than we knew what to do with from the Queen, Prime Minister and other notables, and our particular native friends. The surplus was, therefore, redistributed to others who seemed most in need of it. On January 1st, 1872, we went by invitation to eat Jaka, *i.e.*, dried beef from last year's feast, with the Queen. But no Queen was present. It was quite a formal affair in a large house outside the palace enclosure, presided over by the Chief Secretary of State. We sat down at a long table to eat rice and this so-called delicacy. But most of us only ate a few mouthfuls; and, after the exchange of a few compliments, we arose and departed to our respective homes.

One of the advantages, or disadvantages, as the case might be, of these functions, and indeed any other of a public character, was the particular notice certain persons took of one's clothes. At that period, before regular traders had begun to come, the nobles and high officers and their ladies were always on the look-out for novelties; and, although we did not set up as sellers of old clothes, we were almost sure afterwards to receive a visit from a messenger to ask whether this or that article of attire was for sale. My wife and I had our due share of these enquiries, which were generally of a persistent character, and occasionally resulted in the

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purchase of some article we had made up our minds to discard.

Sometimes, however, the attentions of these messengers became a great nuisance. There was one man who was something more than a messenger. He was a little fellow with a pair of sharp eager eyes and an unctuous smiling face, who was most pertinacious, in fact sometimes he was a perfect pest. His name deserves to be celebrated in history and song—Rainijohn, the father of John—that's it; though he did not look as if he could be the father of anybody. He afterwards became an officer of the palace. When we knew him he was a petty trader, but was withal a very respectable man. He was a sort of go-between with some of the great folks near the Queen and foreigners whose articles of dress or household furniture they coveted. He got commissions for all sorts of things. Any article would do, if it only afforded him the chance of making an honest penny.

He was great on boots—boots of any kind, it mattered not what—men's boots, women's boots, or children's boots, especially if they were only just out from home, and of the latest pattern; and he spared no pains to get them. Once a lady was out riding and heard someone come panting up behind her, when the bearers were going at a smart pace along the road. Turning round she discovered it was John's father. He had been struck at a distance with the nice-looking gown she was wearing, and he had come to whisper smilingly the enquiry whether she would part with it, and if so at what price? Indignantly repulsed in that direction, he tried another, asking with a sweeter smile than before, "May I not call to-morrow to see if you have any

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more of those pretty boots you have on?" No answer was returned, and the bearers were told to hurry on. Curiosity, however, impelling the owner of the coveted things to glance backwards, she saw John's father wistfully looking after her with hat in hand, continuing to make his adieus.

The good man wanted but the slightest of encouragement, and sometimes not that, to come to your house at all hours for boots or gowns or anything else that he took a fancy to ; and he liked nothing better than some such excuse as bringing you an important message from one of the members of the Government, to enable him to get in and have a look round. Once in he was seldom got out again before he had spotted everything new from across the seas, and enquired the price of almost all the furniture in the room.

But the days of private sales of personal belongings practically disappeared when foreign traders set up in the capital ; for long before we left, no lady or gentleman had the opportunity of seeing an old acquaintance in the shape of a former article of dress on the person of a gaily attired princess or a magnificent noble. Second-hand clothes were no longer the mode, and there would have been no sale even for a tall silk hat.

About this time a travelling circus surprised the inhabitants of Antanànarivo by making its appearance in their midst. It was a marvel the party ever got up country at all. They came at the beginning of the bad season, and in an impecunious condition. They had to raffle a horse at Tamatàve, it was said, to provide funds for pressing necessities, and, on their arrival in the town, they were obliged to borrow of the Malagasy, who, seeing their opportunity, lent them £40 on the security

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of their personal effects at the handsome rate of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. weekly.

Very serious misfortune quickly befell them. They were all taken ill with fever. The fearful journey up had been too much for them, and the proprietor of the company and one or two others actually died. We missionaries, who were then almost the only foreigners in the capital, did our best to come to their relief with contributions of tea, sugar, bread, and other necessities, out of our own scanty stores. We made also special purchases on their account. We gave them medicines also, and did what doctoring and nursing we could. But, like some others of our distressed fellow countrymen who had received assistance in time of trouble, these people went away and abused us, saying, amongst other things, that we interfered with the success of their undertaking, and that, although we lived in luxury ourselves, we refused them relief in trouble.

After the departure of the circus, no company of performers of any kind ventured to try their luck in the highland capital; but individual professors of the art of entertainment found their way up from time to time to exhibit their skill, notably one worthy who claimed to be a distinguished prestidigitator. Of course, the Queen heard of the celebrity—"Professor" somebody or other—a dapper little Frenchman, and sent him a request to practise his sleight of hand before the court.

The day came, and a goodly number of spectators were present. The professor's art was certainly extraordinary; but little can be said for his tact, if the story of what occurred is as has been represented. He astonished the people by the rapidity of his manipula-

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tions, and the skill he displayed in jugglery ; but he horrified them and grievously offended the Queen by unconsciously committing a great breach of etiquette. One would have thought that a polite member of an extremely sensitive and ceremonious race would have intuitively appreciated the situation, and done nothing even unintentionally against the laws of propriety. But he did not understand that the very appearance of taking a liberty with such an august personage as the Sovereign of Madagascar would neither be permitted by Her Majesty herself, nor her adoring subjects. When, therefore, he seemed to throw a glass of water at the Great Queen, though it became changed into a variety of fragrant flowers, before falling in profusion at her feet, something like consternation was the result. The exhibition came to an abrupt end, and the exhibitor retired in dread confusion. Fortunate for him, perhaps, was it that the event occurred after the court had had some experience of wonders from abroad, as otherwise he would have stood in considerable danger of being lynched on the spot. As it was, the action was satisfactorily explained, and peace patched up. But the man's popularity immediately waned, and he soon found it expedient to retire to the coast.

We had been kept very busy at one thing and another since our coming. Besides continual book study, I took advantage of every opportunity to become acquainted with the language, and to that end assisted in the nearest school, and attempted now and again to take part in the Sabbath services. The knowledge came gradually, but more quickly than I had hoped. After correction I read a chapter, then a short prayer, and, growing bolder, preached a sermonette. As the

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opportunities were many, I soon became familiar with both the words and the subject, and was able to make a further and more successful effort, not, however, without being guilty of many ludicrous and serious mistakes. I was greatly helped by the fact of being put in temporary charge of a large district. Besides being of some service to the young men of the city church, I was frequently engaged in teaching a class at the house of one of the principal dignitaries, whose unofficial name was Rabè. This officer was a sociable, friendly fellow, and very intelligent withal, taking considerable interest in religious and social movements, and exercising a great influence over his compatriots. We had a Bible class at Rabè's house for some time. Then it was turned into a study hour for English, and the reading of Bunyan's immortal book, "The Pilgrim's Progress," in the course of which I was able to drive home many a spiritual and moral lesson.

In the meantime, several letters came from the directors of the Society, which practically settled the appointment of Mr. Brockway to Ambòsitra, and myself to the more southern town. Accordingly we began to make preparations for departure. But the arrangements made could not be carried out, as circumstances rendered advisable another course. We were asked, pending a further reference home, to continue to assist the workers in the capital, the one to take the oversight of the training of teachers, in the Normal School, and the other to instruct the sons of the nobles within the palace enclosure. The latter post was occupied by myself at the request of the Prime Minister.

Teaching in the Palace School was soon afterwards begun. The authorities, however, had a queer idea

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of what accommodation was required. They had provided the only room in a wooden building, some twenty feet square, which was one of the old royal houses with great horns on the gables, and adjacent to another of a similar kind under which was buried an ancient monarch. But into this room there protruded a large bulkhead, which took up quite a third of it, so that the school house made two sides of a triangle into which were gathered some two dozen young men and one or two boys. The place was fearfully draughty, and smelt horribly, because on the other side of the bulkhead was a cattle pen with a bullock in it.

In this most inconvenient and unhealthy place I taught for a time, loyally assisted now and then by one or two of the brethren who came for special subjects. But it was impossible to continue long ; I caught cold repeatedly, and the scholars suffered in the same way. We were all glad, therefore, when, in the early part of July, the number of pupils was increased and the Queen gave us permission to occupy the upper floor of the Silver Palace, so called from the silver ornaments round the outside walls. Here we had a better chance of maintaining our health. The conditions were for some time, however, altogether unfavourable to progress. Desks were procured with difficulty, and there were no school appliances. At length, after more than another month of waiting, the Prime Minister came in and handed over about £25 to buy maps, books, and other things.

Then, another difficulty was constantly experienced. There was no money to pay my native assistant. He was expected to do his work for nothing, like most other Government servants. Of course, I could have procured

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mission money ; but it seemed to me a shame to ask for it, when these rich people could so well afford to pay. So His Excellency was induced to issue an order that the parents of the boys should pay fourpence per month for the maintenance of the teacher. This was a hitherto unheard-of thing in education, and was the beginning of a great deal of unpopularity and trouble for myself. In the estimation of some of the officers, I could not have committed a greater sin, and they did not let me forget it.

This practical assistance was, so far, encouraging from a religious and moral point of view, as well as from that of education ; though there was really not much chance with these young fellows. They had never been properly corrected from their childhood up, and now their bad practices were confirmed, and their temptations were far more numerous. Everybody feared them, and none were bold enough to report their evil deeds ; and even when their parents did get a hint of what was going on, they either disbelieved it or ignored it altogether. For instance, after I had ceased instructing them, one of the Prime Minister's own sons behaved in a most shocking and unreportable manner. His father was plainly informed by a credible and trustworthy foreign witness ; but nothing was actually done. Rainilàiarivòny was certainly very angry and indignant ; nevertheless he gave a willing ear to the counsellor who declared that the report was incorrect, and had arisen from foreign suspicion and jealousy. Poor fellow ! he was good enough at heart ; but he was surrounded by crowds of sycophants and liars, and too often allowed their representations to turn him aside from the stern path of duty.

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The majority of the young men were undoubtedly a bad lot, and some of them came to a bad end ; yet the opportunity of teaching them, of making friends of them, and having long talks with them about the highest and the best things was highly prized, and was, I am certain, not altogether in vain. As to their intellectual and scholastic attainments little can be said. Some few made fair progress ; but what could be expected in this direction when some were in the habit of getting their more sensible and clever retainers and servants to do their exercises for them ?

CHAPTER III

TROUBLOUS TIMES

TOWARDS the fall of the year the Government commenced that half-and-half, penny wise and pound foolish system of playing at soldiers, which encouraged national pride and vainglory, and had probably something to do towards hastening invasion and leading ultimately to humiliating defeat and subjection to a foreign power.

In October there was brought up an Armstrong gun, amidst tumultuous manifestations of rejoicing. It was an interesting, if a somewhat ludicrous spectacle. The roads were prepared beforehand, and then quite an army turned out to bring it up to the palace enclosure. The gun itself, looking bright and smart, was on a regular military gun-carriage. It was drawn by a whole host of boys and a few soldiers ; and upon the box, holding on for dear life, was an old fellow dressed in a full-rigged general's uniform, cocked hat and all ; and following behind them was a large crowd of officers dressed in their usual odd assortment of gay garments. Behind them again tramped the rank and file, and bringing up the rear was a considerable number of ordinary porters carrying the new rifles and bayonets.

About a month later on came an English sergeant, who had been engaged to drill the troops and accustom them to the new weapons. His arrival was made a

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very great event. He was received with full military honours. The Queen's guards, accompanied by their band, were sent out to escort him up to the palace whilst the streets were lined with admiring and enthusiastic crowds of people.

This new movement meant a complete change of pupils in the Palace School ; for all the young men were taken away to be trained as military officers, their ordinary education being supposed to be complete ! Everything else seemed to be forgotten, and nothing was talked of but the modern army and the noble presence of the grand man who was to be its leader. He really was a tall, handsome, fine-looking fellow. Nothing, moreover, was thought too good for him. A nice house was provided, and all the big-wigs appeared to vie with one another in bringing him the best of good things ; for was he not the man upon whom the people's hearts were set, and whom the Queen delighted to honour ? I met him one day with no less than eight massive gold rings on his fingers, and he told me that Her Majesty had given orders to supply him with the nicest of imported delicacies. It was bad for anyone who forgot to show him proper respect, and much more for the individual who did him actual wrong, as he was hot tempered, and would stand no ill-doing. My chief helper in the Palace School, for instance, was forbidden the Rova—the palace enclosure—because he repeated a scandal to the sergeant's discredit in which there was no basis of truth.

Of course the good fellow's head was turned with all this fuss. But, notwithstanding an illness of several weeks, he made capital progress with the drilling of the cadets and his special company of men. At a review

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to which we were all invited, and which we felt obliged to attend, we were astonished at the smart appearance of his soldiers, the facility with which they executed orders, and the dexterous way in which they handled the modern rifles and new field-pieces. Besides, the uniforms were resplendently new, though the flimsy helmets, which looked like tinselled cardboard, left much to be desired. My old scholars in the ranks appeared exceedingly gratified, as we admired their proficiency ; and the boys who had taken their places in the school longed to be old enough to be with them. It was a complete triumph for the sergeant, who, however, had now become a general ; and he looked every inch of one, as he stood erect in brilliant attire majestically issuing his orders to the troops.

Then, the new general, who thought he had secured a permanent as well as a most important and lucrative post, obtained leave to go to Mauritius for his wife and children. But it was not long before the situation underwent a change. The ardour of the authorities cooled ; their efforts slackened, and their favours became less frequent and less valuable ; the tight rein the commander kept over the young officers became irksome, and complaints of undue severity began to be made ; whilst he himself became greatly dissatisfied. Then, as time went on, difficulties increased, and were intensified by the indifference, if not the dislike and secret opposition, of the one side, and by the off-hand independence and want of tact of the other.

The general was often at our house in those days, and used to tell me of his affairs, and get me to translate his correspondence concerning them. This, doubtless, did me little good, as the native officers probably sus-

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pected me of taking his part. Still, I could not very well refuse to assist a fellow countryman in difficulties. According to the general's own account, his conduct was certainly extraordinary. He boxed his little son's ears, for instance, for making the usual low native obeisance to the Queen. When again the lad trod by accident on Her Majesty's robe—which would probably have meant death to any unfortunate being who did the same in the bad old days—and an attendant pointed a spear at the child, the father instantly sprang at the man, caught him by the throat and threatened to choke him. Poor old Rànimàharàvo, the Chief Secretary of State, went in fear of his life because the terrible English soldier had declared he would " chuck the old nigger down the stairs " ; and even the Prime Minister himself hastily retired on one occasion, when his irascible foreign officer appeared to be on the point of attacking him for daring to utter a threat.

I don't know how far these stories were true ; but probably they had some foundation in fact, as the man was an altogether fearless fellow, who seemingly did not care what he did. Under these circumstances something had to be done ; for, as an officer afterwards told me, they were afraid of his seriously hurting some one, and so his dismissal soon came about. He was tormented dreadfully by persons who thought petty persecution would please the authorities ; but they paid him up handsomely, and secured him a safe journey down country.

Instead of seeking an officer properly trained and thoroughly well able to reorganize and command the army, the Government procured another drill-sergeant from Mauritius, who was a man of a different stamp

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from his predecessor. He was a good soldier, doubtless, but he was shorter, and had not such a fine soldierly bearing. Moreover, he was of a milder disposition, and found greater difficulty in managing the young nobles and others who were vain enough to think themselves his superiors. He had not, besides, a great idea of dignity. He saddled a great ox and delighted his company of cadets with curious equestrian performances thereon. Then he purchased a horse—a big powerful animal which looked as if it had been accustomed to pull a brewers' dray or a warehouse waggon. The man could scarcely stretch his legs across the back of his ungainly steed. But when he did so and thundered down the road on his way to the parade ground, he was the wonder and terror of all beholders, and, when he got there, the laughing stock of the recruits. Then, because the military zeal of the Government had flagged and they gave their foreign officer little to do, he became a sort of agent for one of the firms on the coast, and went into the grocery line. Again he turned dairyman and bought cows and sold milk and butter, and afterwards he sold the cows and lost money. Then he made a windmill to grind rice, and left it where he built it to become firewood for the public; and finally, the authorities and he getting thoroughly tired of one another, he went back again to Mauritius, where, if he expected less wages, he doubtless hoped for more regular and agreeable employment.

The news that came up to the capital in the month of February had helped to foster and intensify the military spirit of the people and to render more popular the foreigners who had come to teach the art of war. A force of about 150 men had been defeated by the

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wild Sàkalàva of the south-west, and a couple of small guns they had with them captured. In the opinion of the authorities that was a great disgrace, and a council of war was held, not only to consider the best way of retrieving the disaster, but to decide what was to be done with Rabèbòsika, the general who had suffered it to take place.

Now it had been the practice from time immemorial to burn to death before the entire army any unfortunate soldier who had been proved guilty of cowardice before the enemy. Hence their common proverb, "Better advance to be killed, than retreat to be burned." It was feared accordingly that this would be the fate of the poor old fellow who was ordered to be brought up for trial. We felt that this would be a most shocking thing, and an everlasting disgrace to any Government professing itself Christian. So a meeting was called of every foreigner in the place at which it was decided to wait and watch events, and, at the first sign of the authorities coming to such a decision, to make at once a most emphatic protest. It was at first thought that this should be made by a thoroughly representative deputation from all parties; but it was afterwards agreed to put it into the hands of Mr. James Cameron, who was one of the former missionaries before the persecution broke out, and who was then engaged in altering and repairing the royal palace. He was much respected and beloved by the Queen and the Government as well as by ourselves.

Time passed and all sorts of disturbing rumours were current. At last, at the end of April, the prisoner was brought up to a village just outside the capital to await the final decision. Our meeting was held on May 2nd,

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and our old friend duly made his appeal in our united name. It was not altogether successful, as, whilst admitting the undue severity of the proposed punishment and the adverse effect it would have on native relations with foreign Governments, the Prime Minister did not see how the law could, with safety to the country, be altered. So we were still left in suspense, and some of the less hopeful began to fear the worst.

A great gathering of soldiers took place on the plain of Imàhamàsina to the west of the city, and we wondered what was going to happen. A number of us met at the printing office overlooking it, and were all more or less in a highly excited and apprehensive state. However, we had not to wait in suspense very long, for Mr. Cameron came riding through the gate with a smiling face, and said, "It's all right, Rabèbòsika is to have his honours taken away and a musket put into his hands," a sign that he was degraded to the ranks. Thus was settled this most distressing affair in a way which redounded to the credit of the Government, and which showed the remarkable influence of the new religion that the Queen and her people had taken for their own.

But although the commander's life was saved, the disaster for which he was said to have been responsible had yet to be avenged. Preparations had already been begun in a spasmodic fashion; but now they had to be carried on in earnest, and the selection of men had commenced. In about a month, two expeditions were ready.

From what has been said of the condition and prospects of the native soldiers, it can be well imagined that we missionaries sympathized much with the poor

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fellows who were appointed to go to the war, and with their wives and families they were leaving behind. It occurred to some of us, therefore, to arouse a fellow feeling amongst the people on behalf of their compatriots who were forced to fight their country's battles, and to induce them to supply, as far as possible, the necessities of the sick and wounded. To illustrate my point, whilst preaching at Ampàmarinana, I enlarged on the noble example of Florence Nightingale during the Crimean war, and the wonderful development of the movement amongst civilized peoples since that period. I was astonished at the depth of feeling and the wave of sympathy it excited. Indeed, I could hardly go on for it, and when the service closed, there was no doubt as to what the worshippers in that church would do. In the course of a few days, some £12 was collected, besides quantities of medicine and rags, etc. Moreover, the idea caught on, and was taken up almost everywhere ; and before the men went away in the middle of June, and whilst they were at the front, they were supplied with considerable sums which were the expression of the practical sympathy of their Christian fellow countrymen.

A short time after the departure of the soldiers, the Queen herself, together with almost all the principal officers, and a multitude of followers, took a journey into the Bètsilèo country in accordance with what appeared to be royal custom.

Her Majesty was absent fully three months, re-entering her capital on October 30, when she made a speech to the people from the large platform surmounted by the same canopy used at her coronation. The open space in Andohàlo was packed by the many thousands

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who had assembled. The hearts of all were glad, not only because they were sincerely attached to her person, but because a general feeling prevailed that her journey had been the means of accomplishing much good. The cause of religion had been advanced, and many acts of kindness and charity had been performed in all the districts through which the royal progress had been made. The day, too, was a grand one, quite a contrast to that preceding it, when there was a fearful thunderstorm, and torrents of rain flooded out the tents of the incoming thousands.

The two military expeditions were not far off, and in about another month they had both re-entered the city; that of Rabè first, and afterwards the one commanded by Ràinimàharàvo. The former had been eminently successful, having judiciously accomplished its objects by peaceable means. It was a new thing for the warlike and suspicious Sàkalàva to be treated justly, as well as firmly; to find themselves able to rely upon the word of the Hovas, and to have their persons and their property respected. When also they discovered that all that was required of them was to acknowledge the supremacy of Ranavàlona and to make some amends for the mischief they had done, they gladly complied with the request, and laid down their arms.

How far the action of Ràinimàharàvo's expedition complied with this policy we know not. The fact can only be recorded that a battle was fought, in which numbers were killed on both sides, and that afterwards the enemy took refuge in an island fastness, whence they could not be dislodged. The return of these troops afforded the saddest of spectacles. All were in

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a dirty and ragged condition and seemed very weary and footsore ; many, indeed, walked with difficulty, being scarcely able to drag themselves along. These had been relieved of their muskets, whilst numbers of men, women and slaves came by carrying the weapons of others who had either been slain by the Sàkalàva or had died from want and disease. There was one thing, however, which rejoiced our hearts. There was no string of captives who had been made slaves. This was a bad practice of the past, which had been done away with for ever.

Foreigners in the capital were often troubled by the depredations of thieves and robbers, who were sometimes very bold and enterprising. The most exciting thing in that line that then happened to us was the theft of a gold ring, which I had given my wife before marriage. It suddenly disappeared, and, notwithstanding a thorough search and a lengthy enquiry, it could be found nowhere, and we gave it up for lost. But one day, months afterwards, it was seen on the finger of the cook. He had recognized it in the possession of a man in the market, and had borrowed it for a bit. The thief turned out to be another servant who had been placed upstairs to see that a workman doing something in the room did not steal. He himself had taken it and sold it to the man in the market for a shilling. We were not long, of course, in paying the money and regaining possession.

I was busy during this period in superintending as usual churches and schools, and in doing what was possible for the Palace School, but now under very discouraging circumstances. The Prime Minister had no longer the same interest in it. After the sergeant

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came to reorganize the army he probably thought he had something more important to think about, and he instructed Rànimàharàvo to look after it and do all that was considered necessary. He could not have made a worse arrangement, in the interest of either teachers or scholars; for this mean and meddlesome old man was the one who had particularly objected to my asking the parents to pay something towards their sons' education. Now was his opportunity to take it out of me; and he did not forget to do so, interfering with my methods of teaching, my instructions to the lads, and taking care, as far as he could, to delay the supply of necessaries. As to the native teachers, poor fellows, they had a bad time of it, being obliged to give their services, and never sure of the miserable pittance promised them.

Nevertheless something was done. I made friends with the scholars, visited them when they were sick, and did my best to get them on as opportunity allowed. So that we were far from having an altogether unhappy and unprofitable time, and now and then we had a very good innings indeed. One such was when the Queen was going out to the royal gardens at Mahàzoarivo. The boys were ranged up alongside the palace, and when Her Majesty appeared, she stopped the procession to hear them sing a national hymn, and then listened with surprise to three hearty English cheers. She was so pleased that she sent them each a present and asked for them a holiday, which, of course, was readily granted.

In the meantime it had been arranged that we should take up work at Fianàrantsòa, and I went down south a second time to see if the arrangement could be carried

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out. Difficulties, however, occurring, the plan was altered, and I was appointed to take the place of the Rev. G. Cousins at the College during his furlough home.

On the return journey we had some curious experiences at Ambòdifiakàrana—at the foot of the ascent—and on the high plateau above it. On arrival we heard the beating of a drum, and a great noise of shouting and clapping of hands. Looking in at the door of the house from whence it all came, I saw that the place was full of people, all crowded round three of their number whom they were dancing up and down, hoping thereby to drive the sickness out of their bodies. They had been at it quite a long time with no indication of success. This was the custom called “Sàlamànga,” which was almost universally followed before the introduction of Christianity.

What with the foul air in the close place, and the long continued violence of their enforced exertion, perspiration was pouring from every part of the poor creatures' bodies, and they were ready to drop from exhaustion. Happily I succeeded in inducing these native shakers to desist for a time from their attempted cure, telling them it could do no good, and that if they went to the missionary at the nearest station he would probably be able to relieve their sufferings. But the people did not settle down very quietly, and, ever and anon, we heard the noise of the drumming and shouting.

After the evening meal we all lay down to rest, hoping, as we were very weary, to soon fall asleep; but sleep was impossible. The hubbub continued, and, to add to it, the rats were troublesome. So about midnight I rose and proposed to the men to clear out and make a night march. I feared they would not consent,

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but was agreeably surprised to find them quite willing—rather eager indeed to go on than otherwise.

It turned out far harder work than we had imagined. The long climb up the ascent was accomplished in good time and capital spirits, though the men were tired out with the previous day's work ; but when they reached the top, some 2,000 feet higher, and stood upon the great plateau about 6,000 feet above sea level with no protection from the piercing blast that blew from the southern ocean, they positively shivered with cold ; and, instead of going briskly to keep up their circulation, they crept along as if they were numbed.

I was feeling but a little better myself, although protected by a warm Scotch plaid and a very thick rug. The biting wind seemed to pierce everything. We were all wretched in the extreme, nevertheless we were bound to go on, there being no shelter anywhere. After being out three hours, however, we espied a shepherd's hut, if it may be so called, a short distance from the track, and we made for it at once. It was no other than a low grass roof built upon the ground, about 20 feet by 10 feet, and surrounded by a turf wall a foot high, just to shut out some of the cold, and help to keep together the shaky roof. Inside were two or three men, a smoky peat fire, and some fifty pigs and sheep lying together as closely as possible. It did not matter. We were desperate, being like to perish with cold. So we crept in amongst them, and packed ourselves together like herrings in a barrel. I was soon sound asleep, stifling smoke and unclean surroundings notwithstanding, and never awoke till the welcome sunlight streamed in at the opening.

After my arrival home we had an anxious time,

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what with one thing and another. The thieves visited us again at intervals, and were more or less successful. My wife did not get really well, and when the next child came on May 26th, 1874, an accident happened which might have had a sad ending. I was holding the lamp for the doctor, when suddenly the patient gave a startled look, and cried out "Oh!" The mosquito netting round the bed had caught fire. Simultaneously we both put out our hand and crushed out the flame, but not without sustaining a few burns. This, however, we did not mind, as a worse calamity was thus averted, and the affrighted mother speedily recovered from the shock.

We had another escape from fire at the new house to which we afterwards removed. We had gone out to the weekly prayer meeting, leaving the children asleep upstairs in charge of the servants. One of them lit the lamp and put it as usual on the table in the parlour. Now the door of the room, as well as the front door, happened to be left open, and a couple of cats came in and chased one another about, knocking over the lamp in the process. There was at once an explosion and a blaze, and the cloth and the table were soon on fire. Providentially, the cook, who had come in at the back for something or other, heard the noise and saw the flames, and he had the presence of mind to drag the burning cloth out of doors and to beat out the flare on the table. One can imagine how thankful we were. Had the man not been in the way, the whole house would speedily have been alight, and the little ones possibly sacrificed.

The College classes recommenced in the temporary buildings in the centre of the city on July 13th, and

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I soon settled down to work with the Rev. R. Toy, the senior tutor, to whom I was indebted during my occupation of the post for much valuable assistance, and many acts of kindness. I found the confinement of teaching morning and afternoon, and especially the long hours of preparation at nights (for class books at that time were mostly in the making), very trying and somewhat injurious to health. I was always, therefore, glad when the Sunday came round to enable me to get out into the country to visit the churches. Still the labour was enjoyable and I was very happy in it; but then there came a storm which was the precursor of many evil days of strain and stress, under which I very nearly came to grief.

Part of my work was the preparation of a commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, and I began by giving an exegesis of the first Epistle to Timothy. In going through the first chapter, I came across the expression "men stealers" (verse 10), and, following Dean Alford, took occasion to condemn the stealing of men and holding them as slaves. I could not conscientiously do any other without putting aside the manifest meaning of the passage, and being guilty of a serious dereliction of duty. An animated discussion on the subject ensued, in the course of which I was almost moved to tears at the thought of the indifference of the native Christians generally to the question of the right or wrong of slavery, and to the callousness of many to the sufferings of their fellow creatures who were often treated like brutes, and bought and sold like cattle. The students too were impressed, and some came to see me afterwards to express their concern and desire to give up their slaves if it could be made possible. Others

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again were angry, and made much mischief, as the sequel showed.

Now none of us missionaries dreamt of preaching a crusade against the domestic institution, and it was scarcely ever mentioned in public; but when the subject fairly came in our way, or when we were asked about it, we did not conceal our view that it was a sin against humanity and in the long run an injury to the State. Hitherto nothing in the way of indignant protest on the part of the authorities had ever come of these frank expressions of opinion, although some of them had already been given by other missionaries before numbers of people; but now the opportunity was taken to make a tremendous fuss, of which, unhappily, I was destined to bear the brunt, and to be the subject subsequently of a long series of more than petty persecutions.

A few weeks afterwards, whilst we were engaged in dealing with another case of theft, the news came that the Queen and Prime Minister were very angry with me because of what had been said about "men stealers," and had sent an official complaint to the committee then sitting. We were, of course, greatly concerned, and, feeling the need of Divine guidance, I went upstairs and laid the matter before the Lord. Then, much more calm and self-possessed, I took my notes of the lecture and my copy of Alford, and went over to explain to the brethren what had actually occurred.

They could take but little or no exception to what had been written, and it was agreed, after discussion, that Messrs. Briggs and Jukes, who had already seen the Prime Minister, should have a second interview, with the idea of smoothing things over, and giving the

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assurance that we should do nothing that would be likely to excite the people and create the disturbances they feared. They did so the next day, and saw His Excellency surrounded by the officers of State, some of whom, headed by my old enemy Rànimàharàvo, wanted me to be turned out of the country forthwith, or at least prevented from teaching at the College again. Ultimately, however, it was agreed that I should be admonished, and that the students be told to tear the objectionable passage from their note-books. I was subsequently informed that a sort of council had been held in which the general opinion was expressed that all the foreigners had agreed to a crusade against slavery, and that I was the first to be bold enough to speak.

Apparently that was the end of the business. But in thus speaking against the cherished institution of slavery I had incurred the anger and hatred of many, and was yet to learn to my cost the meaning of their well-known proverb: "A Hova's malice—it shows only when the chance comes." In my subsequent career they remembered it against me again and again.

To turn for a while to something less serious, it may not be out of place to relate one or two travelling experiences that occurred about this time. To begin with the donkey, I almost think I was the first person in Antanànarivo to requisition the services of that humble, but very useful, animal. At any rate those services had been in abeyance for years, for scarcely a lifeless burden did Neddy bear, and never an animate body was he seen to carry. He had a right royal time of it, contentedly browsing the grass alongside the road, and kicking up his heels if any too venture-

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some individual came near to interfere with his enjoyment.

Now it occurred to me that I might purchase one of his kind, and have basket panniers made to carry our two children. So I bought a likely looking animal for the sum of £6, and fitted him up with bridle and pack saddle. The venture was a complete success, and whenever the little folks were taken out, they and their bearer were always the centre of an admiring crowd.

"But why," thought I, "should I not use him myself?" Why not, indeed? He would save me the expense of the palanquin men up to the College, and perhaps take me a journey into the country. So I determined to try. A riding saddle was procured, and I mounted, only to be pitched off again and again. But conquest came at last, and Neddy bore me up to the College every morning, much to the interest and amusement of the natives.

He was of some assistance also on the Sabbath when I visited the near congregations, although now and again he and I got into difficulties. The roads, except when they crossed the rice fields, were fairly passable; but the bridges, even those near town, were generally difficult to negotiate. One such was that out to the west along the great embankment that kept out the waters of the Ikôpa from the surrounding country. It was thrown over a deep tributary stream about twenty feet wide, and was none other than a narrow rounded rough log.

Now the donkey managed all right by being taken, after some difficulty, through the water; but it was a more difficult matter for his owner. Having boots on

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it was impossible for him to walk over alone, and very questionable even if he had taken them off, owing to the fact of his being unaccustomed to walk barefooted. So his man took him by the hand to lead him very gingerly along. They safely reached the middle of the log ; but there the leader himself lost his balance and jumped into the stream, luckily letting go at the same time his master's hand. This was a pretty fine predicament in which to be placed. What was he to do ? He had no time to think. Instinctively, however, he slowly lowered himself down, put his hands under the bridge, and tried to get astride. In the effort he fell over. Away went helmet and umbrella. But he himself did not follow. He had got a firm hold with feet and hands, and, hanging downwards like a monkey on a stick, he came very leisurely to bank, to the great admiration of those who were witnesses of the unwonted sight.

Becoming tired of the donkey at length, I disposed of him to a country brother, and bought a horse—a tall, fine-looking animal who, when he liked, could distance any competitor. Now horse-riding in Imèrina in those days was rather a difficult and dangerous pursuit, even for a dexterous and skilful rider, as the roads were very rough, and were often intersected by numerous ditches and water-courses, muddy rice fields and marshy places, to say nothing of the rocky byways in the mountains. For the inexperienced amateur it was still more difficult. I was totally unaccustomed to the art, but soon got into the way of it, and maintained a tolerably firm seat in the saddle. This did not prevent me, however, from meeting with several nasty accidents.

On one occasion the horse stumbled in a narrow gully, throwing me against the steep side and under-



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neath him ; but the animal had the sense, as it seemed, to stand perfectly still and give me the opportunity of getting up from between his legs with no bones broken and only my helmet smashed. At another time he did exactly the same, when a struggle might have had a much more serious issue. I had to get over a slanting rock right across the track, which sloped down to a gully some fifty feet below. Just before it there was a small ditch, and as Tom, being blind in one eye, always hesitated before such an obstacle, I got off and on to the rock to lead him across. He jumped before I was aware of it right on to my chest, and, of course, knocked me down on to the rock ; but happily he stood quite clear, and I was able to get up and across, the noble animal safely following. I sustained no injury but a large bruise where the horse's hoof struck.

Another experience was of a pleasanter and somewhat amusing kind. On a certain Sunday, when I was returning home along the north road from preaching in one of the villages, the horse was going at his usual pace, and I was thinking of nothing in particular, when I became conscious of the clatter and patter of hoofs behind me. Looking round I saw "Tomasy"—for that was what the natives called him—coming towards me on his fast-trotting Pegu pony. As soon as he was opposite, he set his mount at a furious gallop ; and the challenge being so patent and the temptation so great, I just leaned forward and whispered in my own beast's ear, "Go it, Tom." He wanted no more urging, but stretching out his long legs he flew like the wind, getting far ahead, and taking me through our narrow gateway at such a pace that I was fearful he would not go

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exactly in the middle and so knock one of my knees against the post.

Now I did not see the instigator of the business for a few days afterwards, when he said nothing about it ; but in the course of a few weeks there came a copy of a newspaper from Mauritius with a marked article entitled " Missionary Horse Racing on the Sabbath." My facetious acquaintance had brought about the race on purpose to provide himself with copy.

Whilst we resided in the capital we occasionally availed ourselves of opportunities afforded us of getting a change, although these changes were not always unmixed blessings. They invariably involved much trouble in getting ready and in starting off, especially when the men were scarce. Then they were always more difficult to manage, wanting perhaps more money when the agreement had been already made. On one occasion after we had started the children our own men disappeared, and we could not get others for love or money, although we sought everywhere and waited long. We were ultimately obliged to send after the nurses in charge to tell them to do the best they could for the little ones during the night, and to defer our own journey till next day.

At one time we went to a village some four hours' journey south, where we had a very alarming experience. We were staying in a house by the side of a tributary of the river Ikôpa, and for days the weather had been bad. This culminated in a very stormy night, the wind blowing in strong gusts, and the rain coming down in torrents. We managed to get through it without any fear, and in the morning we came down to breakfast as usual, leaving a nurse and the little folks upstairs. We

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had just sat down, when suddenly there was a great crash, and then almost total darkness. The first instinctive action was to clap our hands to our heads and then to run out of the back door. The next was to think of the children. We both rushed upstairs together to find that one side of the roof was off, and the lightning conductor sticking into the middle of the floor. Strange to say, however, no one was hurt, and we hurried downstairs again as quickly as possible, and into the outhouse, which served as a kitchen. Here we had to stay for a couple of days owing to the swollen state of the river ; but we did not so much mind that, although the inconveniences were great. We were so thankful for the deliverance.

Occasionally one enjoyed a change without the responsibility of caring for wife and children. Subsequently, when in charge of the same district, I started out with a native friend and our porters for a day or two in the near eastern forest. We made our headquarters at a village two miles west of it, and next morning entered. The first thing was to prepare a kind of leafy hut in which we could spend the night. It was a bonnie retreat, and, after arranging our traps so that we could easily make the necessary preparations for supper and sleep, we set out for the other side of the forest. We had a most enjoyable time, sight-seeing and insect collecting, and when the darkness drew near we arrived back at the hut ready for supper and bed.

We had not reckoned for the rain, though we might have remembered that the first rains were close at hand. It looked ominous and sounded ominous whilst we were returning, for thunder was already in the air, and we had hardly got into the place and begun preparing

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for the night, when down it came as only rain can come down in a tropical land. The leafy roof was, of course, useless, and in a little while the food was spoiled and the beds were soaked, and we ourselves were dripping. In the meantime darkness had really come with the prospect of a most miserable night. The question was should we remain or go? Not long could we be in doubt. There was no help for it, we must seek another shelter. So we packed up as best we could in the darkness and the rain, and started.

Going back those two miles was a very different thing in the darkness from coming over them in the light. Riding was altogether out of the question. We had to walk and get through morasses and over plank bridges, and through the bush as best we could, finding to our cost at every step we took, that a couple of small lanterns were entirely inadequate in the thick darkness for a straggling company of drenched and weary travellers. Fortunately the candles lasted and they were not put out by the rain finding its way in. So after several hours of a most trying pilgrimage we reached the village and found a dry resting-place and a good fire. The next morning, as the rains had really come, and there was no likelihood of their stopping for days, we wisely beat a retreat to try again some other day.

The next excursion was in the company of two colleagues, Mr. T. Lord, and the Rev. W. C. Pickersgill, and was much more enjoyable, a curious experience notwithstanding. We took four men with a palanquin to give us a lift now and then, and carry us over the streams and boggy places, also several other fellows bearing a tent to put our heads into at night, our travelling stretchers, pots and pans, and a good supply of

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provisions. We enjoyed ourselves immensely, going on when we liked, and stopping when we liked, revelling in all the exquisite loveliness of the scenery, and varying the operation now and then by shooting wild fowl and replenishing the larder.

At the close of a hard day's work, toiling along and rushing about after one thing and another, we entered what appeared to be a narrow strip of the forest, and hoped soon to get through to the other side, where we intended to stay for the night. On the edge of the forest we came across a small flock of guinea fowl, which our approach had scared into taking refuge in the trees, and we stayed to secure a couple; then we delayed longer trying our luck at the babacoots away up in the lofty trees, and managed to bring down three or four; that, however, was doleful work, firing at creatures that seemed so full of life, jumping from tree to tree with amazing agility, uttering piercing cries, and looking at us so intelligently and reproachfully when one of their number was hurt.

Night overtook us almost as soon as we had relinquished the ignoble occupation, and we had made no preparation to meet it. The men, too, were scattered and some time must elapse before they could be got together. However, we called a halt as best we could, blowing a whistle and firing off the guns as a signal for the men to gather up; then we settled down on a fallen tree and waited and waited in the darkness, for, strange to say, not one of us smoked and we had no matches about us.

After repeatedly blowing the whistle, for in the darkness we could find no more powder for the guns, the men began to come in. We then discovered the

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matches, struck a light and set the lantern going and waited longer in better spirits. Then the fellows with the tent and the stretchers arrived, but no man with food. By that time we were hungry enough and very thirsty withal ; but no victuals or water could be had. Fortunately, however, we had with us about a third of a bottle of vermouth, a tonic wine to take the place of brandy in case of sickness, and although two of the three were staunch teetotalers, necessity compelled them to join the other in sucking away at the bottle until the contents were all done.

After a while we found a small clearing, and managed to set up the tent, and arrange the stretchers inside. Having made all snug for a snooze when we felt inclined, we induced the men to gather a lot of dry wood and lit up a grand bonfire which we intended to keep up all night, hoping thereby to drive away the miasma which threatened to give us a strong dose of fever.

Setting ourselves down by the side of the fire, resting our weary limbs, warming our toes, and generally taking it easy, we watched the men skin the babacoots, and then spit them on sticks and fix them over the fire to roast. They did not wait until they were properly cooked, but ate them half raw, and almost as black as soot from the smoke of the fire. As for ourselves, being almost as hungry as they, we could of course have shared the dainty meal, but having shot the poor creatures and heard them cry out so piteously, we had not the heart for it. Besides, after all, we had no stomach for the business, as when skinned they looked too much like cats, and we had no drinking water to help us to get them down. We determined to go supperless for

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one night, and sat there talking over the experiences of the day and the prospects of the morrow.

We arranged to take turns during the night in seeing that some of the men kept up the fire. But the watches were not particularly agreeable. We got our native helpers to work with difficulty. They were very weary and did not like being kept awake or being disturbed in their sleep. Then, again, it seemed so weird sitting there in the light of the fire with intense darkness all beyond the circle and the awesome silence of the forest suddenly broken every now and then by some strange mysterious sound. But all things have an end, and in due time the long night passed; so we packed up and resumed our journey in the hope of soon getting through or finding some clear water, in which to have a good wash, and with which to cook a decent meal. We wandered on and on, crushing through the brushwood, and winding round the trees, and ultimately came to the conclusion that we were in a pretty mess. We were actually lost, and there seemed no way of finding a path out of these forest wilds.

Now I had always heard that aborigines could tell the points of the compass almost instinctively. One would imagine that the Malagasy could; for, in the open, where they could see the various objects in the landscape, even if the sun were not visible, they readily turned to any direction they wished to indicate, and would even speak of a smut on the north side of a man's nose. But here in the gloomy shades of the forest, where nothing could be observed but trees and shrubs, they were just as much at fault as we were. In fact they were perfectly nonplussed. The orb of day was shining in the heaven, but none could say

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exactly where we were, not even the two men sent to climb the topmost trees. These somehow got amongst the leaves and could see nothing but the foliage around and above them. They had to give it up and try with us their chance on the ground.

We toiled on hour after hour searching diligently for an outlet, but in vain. At last, when we were faint with hunger, parched with thirst, and well-nigh exhausted with fatigue, we heard the murmuring of a distant stream, and almost at the same moment the sound of an axe falling on a tree in the same direction. Then we hurried up and shouted like so many madmen; for the yells we uttered and the whoops sent forth must, when first heard from afar, have been quite sufficient to frighten any ordinary woodman from allowing us to approach anywhere near him. But the man did not run for his life, as he might have done, leaving us to repent our own folly. He ceased work to listen and, coming to the conclusion that we were not murdering brigands or savage tribesmen, he continued to draw near himself.

He turned out to be a civil and obliging rustic who promptly came to the rescue. Taking in the situation at a glance, and being moreover assisted by a few enquiries on our part, he put himself at the head of the company, and brought us clear of the bewildering trees to a small hamlet on the banks of the river Mangòro. It was then four in the afternoon, and we had been thirty hours without food or water. Need it be added that a good meal was soon cooked and that we found roast guinea fowl the best game that we had ever tasted?

But to return again to more serious events. In those

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days there was a great deal of jealousy and suspicion of foreigners, and some of us came in for considerable trouble. There was the case of Dr. Davidson. It appears that the Prime Minister felt aggrieved because of some real or fancied neglect of the Queen and himself, and became thoroughly angry when a formal complaint was resented. Subsequently the dispute was embittered by the doctor joining with Dr. Borchgrevink, of the Norwegian mission, in announcing that henceforth the rich and well-to-do people must pay something for medical attention and medicine, which they ought to have done long before. The Prime Minister and his friends were furious, and negotiations for the regular engagement of two other doctors at high salaries were immediately commenced. Moreover a great kabary was called, and the quarrel made a national one. The thousands of people present—many of whom knew Dr. Davidson, and had always loved and trusted him—were told not to be grieved, and were informed that the Queen was engaging a couple of fully qualified medical men at her own expense, and that they would be well looked after, at which there went up a mighty shout of approval, although very few of them understood the difficulty, and still fewer suffered from any sense of wrong.

It was all very childish, of course, but all very real, and meant much to the parties concerned. The people were practically told that the man who had done so much to relieve their sufferings in the past had now ceased to be their friend, and the inference followed that they must regard him as their enemy; and at a later period the public were ordered to have nothing whatever to do with him.

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At one time the persecution that ensued was exceedingly hot. The doctor's students were taken away, then his best assistants ; and the implacable authorities were actually proceeding to deprive him and his family of their domestics ; whilst, on account of spies placed round the house, it was positively dangerous for any native or even foreigner to go near him. In fact it was a regular boycott and more—a sort of carrying out of the greater excommunication. It was, however, all to no purpose. The doctor never budged an inch, nor showed the slightest sign of bowing down to the great man ; and, when the persecution became absolutely unendurable, he went away to Mauritius and quickly obtained a first-class appointment under the colonial Government.

Perhaps the want of success in the doctor's case had something to do with making the Prime Minister more obstinate and implacable, when, not very long afterwards, he had occasion to find fault with another foreigner, who had unfortunately put himself technically in the wrong. Here he and his minions could now persecute with a better chance of victory, and they did so. It was useless for the victim to give a reasonable explanation of his conduct, and to promise to be more careful in future. He had either to make a most abject apology or leave the island ; and, after many fruitless attempts to smooth the matter over, he actually did leave, and for some years was not permitted to return.

The Government, very naturally perhaps, objected to criticism from foreigners. Especially annoying was the publication monthly by a few progressive spirits of the first newspaper, called *The Malagasy Gazette*. It

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was popular from the first, as the people enjoyed reading the accounts of things as they actually happened, and not as their big folks would have liked them to appear. That was all very well when those accounts, whether eulogistic or otherwise, referred to other people, but when now and again some record of their own misdeeds appeared, the fat was in the fire ; and if anything was printed which seemed to reflect on the rulers, there was a great blaze. In connection with this the writer was inadvertently the occasion of a considerable amount of vexation. It happened in this way :—

It was then still the custom to regard anything belonging to royalty as sacred, which the people were to avoid touching, and for the passing of which along the roads they must immediately make way, and take off their hats. Now the procession of the Queen's water-carriers often passed through a narrow lane with high walls on either side, and on one occasion Mrs. Houlder was considerably shaken by the men carrying her jumping down a steep entrance into a person's yard in trying to avoid these carriers.

At another time I was riding my horse along this road when suddenly the cry was heard " stand aside ! " and there in front was the long procession of water-carriers with the Queen's officer at their head waving his spear. I was just able to turn my horse and dash into a narrow gateway. But the horse-boy, who was running on in front as usual, was not able to get out of the way. The poor fellow lost his presence of mind. He stooped low and tried to dodge the spear. It was too late; the cruel, or perhaps the unthinking, spearman, gave a thrust and the weapon struck him in the head and laid him bleeding in the lane. Of course I saw no

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reason to conceal the fact, and the circumstance was duly reported in the *Gazette* ; but the remark was added by the editor, or the person who wrote the paragraph, " He was sure Her Majesty would not purchase water with the blood of her subjects." This way of putting it gave great offence, and was one of the things that led to the speedy suppression of the paper.

The operation of the missionary conscience, as manifested in silent or variously expressed protests against cruelty and injustice, was very often awkward and objectionable to the authorities. Then there was the question of slavery, to which allusion has already been made. It was generally understood that we must not speak of the institution publicly ; but the infraction of the terms of the English treaty, which prohibited both the import as well as the export of slaves, was regarded as a somewhat different matter. We felt that, although we would not willingly get the Malagasy into trouble with another nation (well knowing that by so doing we should probably lessen our chances of doing good amongst them), we ought, nevertheless, not to withhold our testimony to wrong-doing. When, therefore, some of our number discovered in the capital a band of no less than fifty Mozambiques, who could not speak the language, in the charge of Arab traders, it was duly reported to the British consul. This materially assisted him and strengthened the hands of the home Government in making representations to that of Madagascar, as it was plain proof that the import of these poor creatures was connived at by some of the principal people in the capital.

There had been correspondence on the subject for some time, and the native Government had already

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issued a proclamation of freedom ; but everybody knew that it was a farce.

Our own Government, however, was insistent in the interests of justice and humanity, so that in the summer of 1877 another proclamation was issued which was meant to be a reality, and all the Mozambiques in the interior regained their freedom. This was a triumph for British diplomacy and enhanced our national prestige ; but it will be readily imagined that it did not add to the popularity of those who had assisted to bring it about, nor help to make the authorities more disposed to grant them any favours.

But apart altogether from the difficulties arising from the suspicions and antipathies of the Government, that was a sad period for the members of the mission. There was much sickness amongst them, and several children and three adults, including our old friend Mr. Cameron, were actually called away. In his case, death was to have been expected, as he had arrived at a ripe old age, after having fought a good fight ; and he finished his course with joy. It was otherwise, however, with young Mr. Wesley and the wife of Mr. Thorne, who were only just commencing their work and looking forward to long years of fruitful service. As to our two selves, my good wife was still far from well, and, as was natural, we were both much worried by the personal troubles through which we had passed, and the continually recurring discussion concerning a regular sphere of labour. However, the time of anxiety seemed to be coming to an end, and in the meanwhile it had been arranged by the committee that I should take a missionary journey to the north-east coast.

CHAPTER IV

JOURNEY TO THE NORTH-EAST COAST—TO MARÒANTSÈTRA

THE first thing to be done was to make the necessary preparations, for the trip was no light one and would involve considerable risk. I well knew that he who at that time contemplated a long journey from the highlands of the interior to the swamps and morasses of the coast must not expect to enjoy many of the comforts and amenities of civilized life ; much less could he anticipate any strengthening and building up of an impaired constitution, or a large addition to a previous stock of good health. On the contrary, scorched by the sun, drenched by the rain, and almost stifled by the offensive and pestiferous miasma from the marshes—it would be a marvel if the traveller did not return from the lowlands looking several years older for the change ; and it would be no wonder if he did not return at all, having fallen a victim to the deadly influence of the climate.

Knowing all this, and knowing it too from several cases of severe illness which had come under my own observation, I naturally felt apprehensive of the consequences. Only the winter before one of the S.P.G. men had died from fever and two of our own had returned from the coast sadly the worse for the journey. It was, therefore, no use shutting one's eyes

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to the fact that the work in prospect might issue in grave trouble to me and mine. Still it needed to be done, and no time was lost in making ready. Having had some experience of travel in this unaccommodating land, where nothing like a decent road or wayside inn exists, I was wishful that nothing should be wanting in the preparations that might be necessary to some degree of comfort and health. Here is a general idea of what went with me : a few stores including some lard for cooking fowls, some candles and a lantern for the darkness, a few tins of preserved meats for the desert, some bottles of medicine, pots and pans for culinary purposes, and a gun, powder and shot for a little recreation. Then came a change of clothes, a stretcher and a thin mattress, and last of all a couple of small tents. Most of the above were carried in tin boxes to save them from getting damaged by the soaking mists and heavy rains.

Then as to personal conveyance. For the last few months, as has been seen, I had been accustomed to a horse which in many respects was better than a back-breaking hip-squeezing palanquin. Taking Tom along the coast, however, was quite out of the question ; so from the back of a good steed I had to come down to a seat stuck between two poles, carried on the shoulders of four bipeds. Having painful experiences of this kind of thing ever since my being jolted up-country on the make-shift affair already described, I did a little doctoring to the one purchased for the occasion, and so contrived the seat that I had literally to screw myself into it instead of being able to sit down upon it easily. It was not a very elegant movement, that of twisting and screwing into the resting place ; but, once in, there was

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scarcely any getting out again, and none of that uncomfortable rolling from side to side in a wider palanquin. Tightly wedged in though I was with the wooden sides padded to protect my hips, I was stiff and sore ere half a dozen hours in the concern had passed away. Try how we may, nothing can make filanjàna riding anything like comfortable. Rolling, bumping and jolting, and sometimes hanging at all sorts of angles between a couple of poles carried by two sets of four men each, over some of the roughest roads in the world, must ever be endured rather than enjoyed.

Everything being ready, the afternoon of June 22nd found me fairly on my way, with just about a score of men to carry self and baggage. In a couple of days we reached Mòramànga, where we stayed for the Sabbath, and had an indoor and outdoor service.

In the morning the men's pass tickets were examined by the officer in charge of the road, and we were allowed to go on. In the forest it rained in torrents ; but we succeeded in reaching the wretched village of Anèvoka, and there lay down to sleep. Getting little rest, we were off fairly early in the morning, and struggled on throughout the day, arriving at Màrozèva in the early evening, where we spent the night. We arose at daylight and pursued our journey. The roads, though as bad as ever at first, soon became better ; and, after a while, improved considerably. The scenery, too, became much more varied and picturesque ; and, consequently, much more enjoyable. Issuing from the dark and sombre forest we came upon a beautiful open country unfolding a magnificent prospect radiant with the morning light. Instead of the huge masses of rugged mountains, with occasional glimpses through the driving

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mists and rain of the steep and slippery paths up and down which we had to struggle, there were verdant glades and pleasant vales, with laughing rills dancing merrily along them, and the welcome sight of firm-looking roads on the lower ground, and dry and easy ascents to the higher. Groves of the useful rofia palm here and there adorned the landscape; numbers of the equally useful fan-leaved travellers' tree spread themselves out in the valleys or partially climbed the hills; the tall slender bamboos followed the courses of the streams and hung gracefully over the rippling waters; while the glorious sun, now high up in the heavens, spread a golden sheen over all. For a time at least the mud and the slush and the darkling gloom were passed, and everything seemed to give promise of a season of brightness and cheerful, pleasant travelling. The anticipation was not quite realized. The rain fell again, and many a bit of nasty road was passed ere we reached Bedàry, where poor Mr. Percival, an S.P.G. missionary, had breathed his last and passed away to rest. We found difficulty in getting a house, and experienced some rudeness from bearers of goods who had arrived before us. They behaved in a shockingly disgusting manner. The doors were soon shut upon them, but for hours the sounds of their mad revelry could be heard.

Getting away from the place as soon as possible in the morning, we pursued our journey, and in the afternoon arrived at Maròmby—the place where canoes were taken for the voyage down the river. I embarked with another traveller, and, the men paddling off down the narrow water-way, we were soon out in the main stream. Moonlight on the dark waters, lighting up every now and then the luxuriant tropical vegetation of the

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near or distant banks and casting strange gleams of silvery brightness amongst the leafy shades ; the racing of the men, enlivened by their monotonous but often quick and stirring ditties ; and our own chatting tongues, making an occasional reference to the crocodile monsters in the depths below—all rendered the thing intensely enjoyable, and made the time pass most pleasantly. The men dipped, or rather dug, their paddles into the water quickly or slowly according to the character of the noise they were making. Sometimes they paddled slowly to quite a sleepy tune ; then they would wake up to a loud and lively one, digging their canoes along at a very rapid rate. A great favourite was one with a chorus, sung very rapidly, but having a long pause on the first word. The men never seemed to tire of shouting it out after any strain the leader cared to improvise. Thus his thoughts ran on the work in hand, and he sang :

“ To unitedly dig is there any there ? ”

and was responded to by the chorus :

“ Is there any there ? ”

Again :

“ Then dig away hard, don’t shirk your share.”

Chorus :

“ Is there any there ? ”

Thus it went on till the leader thought of the night’s rest, and a good supper at the foreigner’s expense before taking it. Liquids having failed, he would try solids ; so began to flatter and cajole with a view something after this style :

“ Then long may our famous foreigners live.

Is there any there ?



READY FOR THE PASSENGERS.

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Of beef and pork what a fill they'll give,
Is there any there ?
To speak not of poultry so fat and fair,
Is there any there ?
And rice very good they will freely share.
Is there any there ?
But gracious me, what a terrible shame !
Is there any there ?
To make such a row in our good friend's name.
Is there any there ? ”

And so on until solo and chorus burst out into a joyous laugh of pleasant expectation, and one of the persons to whom they were looking for a gratuity found himself bending to each dig of the paddle and almost singing out :

“ Then work away hard, you jolly boys there,
Till we all get there ;
To feed you well shall we not take care,
When we all get there.”

Soon we did get there, and we did not forget the poor fellows who had carried us on their shoulders from morn till night, and had then worked so heartily long after sunset to get us safely down the river. Beaching the canoes on the sandy landing place we made the best of our way to the mission-house, and were not long in doing justice to the good supper, to which we also had looked forward.

After a good look at the sea and a substantial breakfast, we were away again, and in a couple of days arrived at Tamatave.

We stayed a short time in the place, and then began the journey up the coast, taking only six men for the palanquin. We reached Mahavèlona in the afternoon of the second day. It was a dreary, uninteresting, hungry ride across poor land with some trees, more

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shrubs, and not a few marshy places to wade through. To add to the discomfort, the rain came down heavily, driven by a piercing, biting wind, and bid fair to penetrate anything like clothing on one's person. For this, however, I was well prepared. With a good rug wrapped round my legs, a thick coat on my back, the whole enveloped in my wife's waterproof—borrowed for the occasion as mine had gone to ruin and had not been replaced—there was not much to fear. So, on I went, with the hood over my head, hands in my lap, and nose near my knees, bending to the storm, and looking for all the world like a poor anchorite wrapt in contemplation and resigned to fate. This was the normal condition of things during the whole time we were on the coast. For a period of nearly two months we had scarcely a single day without rain. Yet, I do not own to being unhappy. Something like this, though not quite so bad, was expected. So when the wind rose, the sky grew black and the clouds began to weep, I tucked myself in rug, coat and cloak, felt snug and warm, put my head to the pelting rain, laughed at the elements in general, waited in wonderful patience until the sky again became propitious ; and, when the deluge ceased and the sun shone out again in cheery brightness, got out of my padding and became once more as merry as a cricket.

Having had nothing whatever to eat since the morning I was faint and weary on arriving at the town, and was only too glad to accept an invitation to dinner from a worthy Frenchman to whom I had an introduction. After receiving a present of some fowls and rice from the governor and the church, and arranging a meeting later on, I went to the house of our friend, and found a

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small company awaiting my arrival. At the repast I was much interested in observing the enjoyment of the guests. Their vivacity and the rapidity with which they talked astonished me. Oh ! how their tongues did wag, their hands work, their heads shake, the pupils of their eyes alternately expand and contract, whilst the rapid change of their countenances from grave to gay and gay to grave was really marvellous. Add to this the fact that the quiet Briton, who was listening and taking note of it all, could understand but little of what was being said, and it will be seen that the thing appeared all the more astonishing and ludicrous to him. It was soon over, however, and, after thanking our warm-hearted host, we went our respective ways.

After having service with the people the next morning, we went on to Mahàmbo, crossing the water several times and getting a splendid ride through the beautiful bit of forest which skirts the shore. A warm reception awaited us. We were shown into a very decent house, and had scarcely settled down in it when the governor arrived with a small train of followers bringing the usual presents, and, among other things, a Belmont sperm candle. He did not know we had a stock of the same article stowed away in one of the tin boxes ; but it was very thoughtful and kind of him. We chatted on far into the evening, and then made arrangements for a meeting of the school and congregation in the morning.

These were assembled at an early hour. I preached to them from the parable of the prodigal son, and afterwards got rid of as many books as possible. When the service was over the hearty old governor would have me go up to the battery to get some refreshment

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before leaving. He was profuse in his intentions and somewhat boisterous withal. Taking me by the hand he led me into his reception room, and bade me sit down to the table. At a sign to his subordinates, out came all manner of drinkables. "Now, sir," said he, "what will you have—claret, port, sherry, brandy then?" My quiet shake of the head at all these sparkling temptations appeared to disconcert him much, as his countenance assumed quite a lugubrious, disappointed expression; but suddenly brightening up he exclaimed, "Well, sir, you won't take strong drink. What will you have? Come, here's the lemonade," lifting it up as he spoke. "Ah, that's just the thing," was the reply. So I regaled myself with this refreshing, but not inebriating beverage together with some of Huntley and Palmer's biscuits, which were evidently kept for special occasions. Then I bade his honour farewell, but not before he had talked to the bearers about the road we were going, and exhorted them to take good care of his new-found friend.

Alas! this pleasant atmosphere of gladsome feeling and hopeful thoughts changed indeed on arriving at Fènoarivo, the cheerless. Passing along the black, sandy beach and rounding the rocky point off which lies the small island that further away seemed to be connected with the mainland, we turned westward from the bay and entered the town from the east. Mud, mud, mud—the place was thick with mud. We struggled through it all as far as the middle of the long street, expecting every moment to meet the man sent on with a message to the governor, but he could not be seen anywhere. After wandering about for some time, we put up at a half-finished house, determined

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to await his arrival. By and by he came with the news that our lodging was to be found at the eastern extremity of the town. Then we struggled back again, and at last settled ourselves in a commodious but filthy place, overlooking a small creek.

The evening was spent in gaining information about the churches, and in making preparations for the coming Sabbath, and the next morning we went up to the church near the battery.

When the service was over a visit was paid to the governor in the large wooden house which was situated outside the fort, like the one at Mahàmbo. He was a very different man from the governor of that place. There was no kindly smile, and no hearty shake of the hand. All was icy ceremony. Everything seemed grave and solemn. Even the inevitable goose was sent for and presented without a single expression of good will, making the recipient feel as if it came, not as a token of friendship, but as a matter of course and a big-wig's duty. I was only too glad to escape from the chilling presence and be off back to my lodging.

The afternoon congregation at the port was much smaller than that of the morning, but I got on much better. The people had sung in their slow way the adaptation of the English hymn, "Return, O wanderer, to thy home," so instead of taking the usual course of preaching them a sermon I sang to them several times the words of the hymn to the right tune and the right time, and tried all the afternoon to explain the gospel that is in it, hoping, praying, and believing that some of the poor wanderers would be led to think of the greatness of the Father's love, and let Him lead them to His home on high. When the service was concluded, I

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retired to the house to think over the events of the day. Mournful thoughts possessed me. There was apparently little real godliness in the town and still less desire for it. All day long there was bustle, noise and disorder. Many shops were open; and numbers of half drunken yelling men were engaged in carrying goods from the beach to the stores of some of the traders. As the evening drew on the noise increased, the inhabitants becoming merrier over their rum, and making a very pandemonium with their drunken yells. Sleep was well-nigh impossible. I rose in the morning feeling all the worse for my visit to the place and longing to be out of it.

Leaving early, we kept along the coast and by dusk we were safely across the Màmìngòry, and encamped in the midst of a few dirty houses on the top of a hill overlooking the magnificent stream. A night in the tent was not disagreeable, notwithstanding the pelting of the rain and the wheezing of an influenza cold caught the previous evening. The latter was not improved during the darkness, and on starting again I fancied myself suffering from all sorts of bodily ills. Fever seemed to threaten, but we pushed on, and ere the day closed I was much better and we arrived safely at Sahàka.

Sleeping again in the tent and leaving the little place as we found it, hidden away among the trees on the top of the low cliffs, we pursued our journey, and soon came upon the most difficult road we had yet encountered. The granite mountains running to the east ceased abruptly at the sea shore and formed rough and irregular cliffs, from 100 to 200 feet high. Along the face of these we had to climb. Of course, palanquin

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riding was out of the question. We had only a narrow slippery ledge on which to pass and it required no slight skill in clutching, twisting and wriggling to reach the northern side in safety. The pouring rain made it all the more difficult and dangerous, and added considerably to the discomfort of crawling and creeping along the face of the rocks. This difficulty overcome, we shortly afterwards sighted the little town of Ivòngo, which, however, was the capital of a province. Here we secured a good house, thatched with the leaves of the travellers' tree, as are almost all the houses in the Bètsimisàraka country. Ere long, Rabòngolàhy, the governor, came to pay me a visit. He was a bald-headed, sprightly little man over sixty years of age, with a noble nose, almost Roman, large piercing eyes, and a loud sonorous voice. It sounded so ridiculously odd when he began his address of greeting, that I experienced great difficulty in keeping my risible faculties under proper control. Of course I listened gravely and made the most respectful of replies, but when he was gone I had to relieve myself by an enjoyable explosion of laughter.

Rabòngolàhy and I soon became very good friends. I found him a man of more intelligence than the ordinary run of native officials. He appeared to know almost everything connected with his own country and a little of foreign affairs. In the course of a very pleasant chat we had together, he informed me that he had been instructed by the former missionaries, and spoke of Messrs. Griffiths and Johns with considerable feeling. He had seen much service with the Government, having been an officer for many years. He was in the fight at Tamatàve in 1845 when an

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attack was made on the fort and the town almost destroyed.

We had two feasts at Ivòngo : one in a small way, consisting of a few odds and ends, given by the writer to the governor and suite, who happened to drop in as he was quietly taking tea ; the other given at Government House in honour of the visitor. A tedious business it was, notwithstanding the prayers of the shouting chaplain, the healths drunk in just the tiniest quantity of sweet liqueurs, and the amusing and edifying conversation of the company in general. The dinner was served up in style, consisting of a great number of courses ; but the worst of it was these courses were a wearisome succession of fowl and rice and rice and fowl, varied now and then with a tough old goose and more rice. Rabòngolàhy did the honours of the table remarkably well and made himself very agreeable. He was at this time at the zenith of his power, though not at the height of his popularity. It was instructive to observe the subservience of all around him, and not a little amusing to see the ragged old soldier at the gate salute him with a useless and very dirty old musket.

When enjoying the hospitality of this remarkable man I little thought to see him in any other position than that of chief of a province, surrounded by a crowd of obsequious menials all eager to do his bidding. But alas ! for human greatness, and unfortunately for him, he was ordered up to Imèrina a few weeks after we had left the town. We saw him again on his way to Antanànarivo, and subsequently overtook him on the bleak moors in charge of the Queen's messenger, looking very unlike a great man of State. He was being carried by four men only. A thick blanket was wrapped around

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his body, but he was drenched with the penetrating drizzle and numbed by the merciless biting blast. His dripping locks, white with age and all disordered by the driving wind, wept copious tears of rain, while his teeth chattered so from the cold that he could scarcely speak to me. Poor old man ! My heart bled for him in his sad reverse of fortune. And, worst of all, afterwards, when he had succeeded in satisfying the authorities as to the government of his province and settled down in the country to a well-earned rest in his old age, the village in which he lived was attacked by marauders in the night, and he and his wife were burnt alive in their own house after bravely defending it for some time. But this is anticipating events. We left him still at the head of his little kingdom doing some good and perhaps less evil.

On the morning of the second day I examined the school children, and afterwards preached to the people who had assembled. The morning after the governor and the whole of his officers led the way down to the river Marimbona to send us away with a blessing and see us safely across. It was a pleasant picture—the broad limpid stream with its surface covered with numberless beautiful lilies and its banks lined with dark green umbrageous trees, tall graceful palms and lovely creeping plants ; the great wooded mountains striking away to the north with their tops enveloped in mist ; the placid sea and the outline of St. Marie away there in the distance ; the long tongue of low sandy soil stretching far away to the east and appearing to be connected in some way with the isle ; and the motley group of governor, officers, foreigner, freemen and slaves—all kneeling on the sand with heads bent

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reverently, breathing a prayer to heaven. Would that the reality and earnestness of the act had borne more correspondence with the exquisite beauty of the scenery around.

Thanking our friends for their kind entertainment and prayerful wishes for a prosperous journey, we embarked in the shaky canoes, crossed the stream, and struck eastwards along the shore towards the cape, there being no short way across country. We reached the most easterly point about half-past five, and then had a fine view of the island. As the setting sun shone full on its mountains, we could distinctly see some of the houses upon their sides.

After a long journey round the promontory, through the swamps and across the river Manòmpana, we reached a little village, which was the brightest spot we had yet seen, and which cheered us not a little. Here we found a small church of sixteen members and a congregation of some sixty persons. Unlike most of the congregations we had visited, this one showed signs of life and healthy useful activity. This was owing to the united labours and stimulating presence of Rànimàro, a slave, and Ralàla, an officer of the customs. The latter came down from Imèrina some years previously on Government business. Being a simple Christian man, desirous of doing what he could for the people amongst whom he came to dwell, he began to teach and preach. Ere long he had gained several converts, and, when religion began to walk in golden slippers, these converts multiplied and formed themselves into churches. Ralàla had continued to be the pillar and chief stay of those little communities, and was greatly encouraged by his success.

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Rànimàro, the slave, was an equally worthy man. While yet a boy he began to love the Saviour and to read God's Word. For this he was frequently punished by his unbelieving owner ; but he would not give it up. Often when his master slept, he would get a bit of fat and a little twist of rag to make a light, and whilst the flame flickered he read with eagerness the Word of Life. Some months after he was brought down to the coast he was sent back to the capital to transact some business for his master. He there purchased twenty-four lesson books and brought them back with him. Some of these he sold and others he gave away, as he wanted his friends to learn to read. He had little encouragement, however, until the Queen and Court professed Christianity, and the people began to pray to gain their approbation. The church was built, and his master became an attendant. A short time afterwards he paid another visit to the capital, and once more devoted some of his scanty earnings to the purchase of books. He bought five Bibles, one of which he kept himself, another he sold to a French Creole, and the remainder to his friends. Once more he was sent up to Antanànarivo, and this time, among other things, he brought away a dozen of the halfpenny hymn books, and gave them away to whoever would promise to learn to sing. He had himself picked up a few tunes before leaving town. We were astonished and gratified to find that his little flock knew five hymns, which they could sing very well. Such unrequited zeal deserved all the encouragement that could be given to it. So we did our best to teach some more hymns and tunes, besides preaching twice on the Sabbath. Long after I had sung myself hoarse and retired for the day, the little

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band of enthusiasts could be heard practising, repractising, and practising again.

We left Manòmpana in a pouring rain, and, after various unimportant experiences along the road, arrived safely at Mananàra. The morrow being Sunday brought a hard day's work. Service was held in the morning in the small cane and rush church near the custom house. It was well filled, and we had a curiously mixed congregation. The body of the place and the back of it was crowded with poor Bètsimisàraka, very scantily clothed; the space around the pulpit was occupied by Hovas in tolerably clean garments, while immediately in front sat a number of well-dressed females of another class. It is but fair to say that they were the neatest, cleanest, and certainly the comeliest persons present. In the interior it was often the elderly women who dressed themselves in gay attire. Here, however, it was different. Instead of decrepit old creatures with poor wizened faces trying to make themselves young and beautiful by heaping on their persons a lot of gaudy clothing, and the usual complement of sham jewellery, there were a company of prepossessing young women looking almost bonnie in their neat clean dresses and smart little hats; and if some of the ribbons and necklaces and rings, etc., were rather too fine, they did not appear so much out of place as they would have done on plainer and more aged people.

It was a strange service. We had a few hymns, but had to give up trying to sing as the noise was great and indescribable. The people, too, did not seriously endeavour to get hold of the words and tunes. They seemed far more taken up with the novelty of the scene

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than the idea of self improvement. Then followed the prayers, and the address, after which the congregation of their own accord sang a hymn in honour of the Sovereign somewhat similar to our "God save the King."

When the service was over I went to have breakfast with a trader, to whom I had a letter of introduction. There was quite a large company of foreign guests present, mostly Creoles, and, to my surprise, I succeeded in persuading all to attend the afternoon service in the Government town up the river. Going away to make themselves more presentable, they soon returned, and ere long we were all on the water in a couple of large canoes. In about an hour and a half we reached the church. It was crowded, and the presence of the traders and their "wives" was quite an event. It was a most unusual sight for the people, as they were not a church-going community, and they must have wondered to see the men subsequently accompany the preacher to his temporary lodgings. Although weary, I was ready for the service, being filled with a sincere desire to get all to understand and receive the message of truth and love. The hymns learnt on the preceding night by moon and lantern-light went well, and so I trust did the sermon. I felt at no loss either for thoughts or for native words wherewith to express them, and never enjoyed so much the exercise of preaching.

When the congregation was dismissed and my friends were walking out of the church with me, I began to realize the difficulty I had got myself into by inviting them to tea. The good wife was not there to prepare, and there was next to nothing in which to serve up the

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eatables and drinkables. I could do for the food—there was the goose which should have been cooked for dinner, and which could be helped out with a duck or two, the everlasting rice, a few biscuits, some sardines, and a little jam. But alas! Where were the knives and forks, spoons, cups, plates, etc.? What a pretty fix I was in. Well! Well! there is a way out of everything of the kind. The governor was just leaving, so I whispered a word in his ear. In a little while there came a man from him with a few of the necessary articles stowed away in a small basket.

With the help of these we managed to consume the solids, and a few extra spoons with two cups, three saucers, a basin, and an old tin can enabled us to drink the tea. In an hour we had finished, and my friends declared that they had made a hearty meal, and had, moreover, enjoyed themselves. No doubt they did, rough and ready though it was, for they seemed good fellows who could appreciate a stranger's desire to give them pleasure, though he had not then the means of making a respectable spread. It made a break in the dreary monotony of their lives, and may possibly have been the means of helping them to higher thoughts and better deeds, while it will always be a very pleasant and happy remembrance to their apparently illiberal host.

In the morning we continued our journey. At Antrôtra we were interested in the wrestling of the young men in the village square. It was very different from the brutal kicking practised in Imèrina, and had a touch of chivalry about it. When the combatants and spectators had formed themselves into something like a ring, one of the experts came forward

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and challenged the rest by thrusting a stick in the ground, after which he prepared himself for the tussle by girding up his loins. Then another accepted the challenge by rushing in and picking up the stick ; which done, he likewise prepared himself for war. When ready the pair faced each other sideways, standing a little apart with their right leg and their right arm extended, while the left arm was placed behind their back. They then closed with the one arm and one leg, and soon he who was less expert or less quick than his opponent was hurled a yard or so forward by a dexterous twist of the arm and leg, and sent sprawling on the ground, amid the shouts and jeers of the bystanders. The victor then repeated the challenge, which was accepted by a second athlete, who was undismayed by the recent display of prowess ; and so the fun went on amid great excitement. Sometimes there were several pairs of combatants in the ring together, and then the noise and the shouting were greater than ever.

We arrived in the evening at Volòina, a place with only six houses, two of which belonged respectively to a couple of Creole traders. One of these was empty, and the owner kindly gave us permission to occupy part. It was a large barnlike place, with three immense rooms, none of which had doors. In the northern apartment were three runaway sailors from a whaler which had touched at Maròantsètra and given them an opportunity of slipping off. The other two rooms were quite at our service. The apartment to the south being quite uninhabitable, we took possession of that in the centre, and made the necessary arrangements for spending the night.

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I dined at the house of the friendly trader, and then returned to the company of my own men and the careless sailors—a sharp French lad, a strapping Creole, and a burly negro. The black had been professing unbounded pleasure at our appearance. He “had heard of a minister being on the way and he was so glad,” for he did “so want a pray.” Said he, “The minister’s come. Now, you fellows, gather up there; let’s make a pray. That’s just the thing,” and then followed other words which had better not be quoted. His unctuous talk and fervent aspirations were interlarded with unwritable oaths, and as I had no desire to help him play the hypocrite in a mockery of prayer to the Divine Being, he was advised to remain quiet and pray alone in secret. Moreover, it was slightly suspected that he and his companions, being needy, reckless men, might be tempted to steal some of the things and do mischief in the attempt. They had been enquiring about the contents of the boxes, and had been told by the bearers that all my money had gone on before. The spot was lonely, and the men were armed with awkward-looking knives. Thinking it just within the bounds of possibility that they would proceed to extremities, and knowing that prevention would be better than cure, I reduced the temptation to a minimum. Praying for them mentally instead of vocally, I quietly loaded the gun, which was only an old carbine, allowing one of them to see me do it, and then placed it at the bed’s head. I usually slept with only one or two of the men in the same room, but this time they all had orders to come. So in they trooped and lay themselves around the great room. Though arrant cowards generally, they have great faith in a

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gun, particularly it if be in the hands of a determined white man. But nothing happened. We had a very quiet night, and in the morning I gave the sailors a little help and we went on our way.

Towards evening we reached the head of Antôngil Bay, where we met the officers whom the governor of Marôa had sent to meet us. These conducted us along the beach and through the jungle to Isôaneràna, the principal town. There we received a hearty welcome. We had no need to distress ourselves in searching for a house. A capital one had already been prepared. This belonged to a bright and obliging Bètsimisàraka judge and his smiling spouse, a buxom woman of huge proportions. Mr. Constantly-going-away and Mrs. Pound-the-rice—for that was the meaning of their native names—readily and cheerfully gave up the best part of their house for my convenience, and certainly did their best to make me feel at home in it. They proved most agreeable neighbours, never objecting to anything, and always willing to oblige. As soon as things were unpacked and we had rested awhile, I went to see the governor, who had already made enquiries after my welfare and sent the usual presents. He received me very heartily in the upper room of his official residence within the stockade, and expressed great pleasure that I had come so far to visit him and his people, and hoped that I could make a protracted stay amongst them.

Next morning he sent more presents of fowls and rice. Presents came also from the church, brought by the pastors and a few of the congregation. After some conversation with them, I paid another visit to the governor, and found him on the point of coming down

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to see me. We had an animated talk about the state of the country and the prospects of religion and education. Andrianàrivòny said that now I had come so far away from the central province, I ought not to return without first paying a visit to the populous district of Anònibè, which was in great spiritual distress and sadly needed help. As this was urged upon me with some warmth I began to think it a duty I ought not to neglect; so I consented to go if the men could be persuaded to undertake the journey.

CHAPTER V

JOURNEY TO THE NORTH-EAST COAST—TO ANÒNIBÈ AND BACK

WHILST waiting for the Sabbath, we had a most startling adventure. Enquiries had been made about some large serpents, called akòma, said to infest this neighbourhood, and towards evening news came that a fine fellow had been seen warming himself in the sun by the side of the road we had passed over on the previous day. So off we went to view and, if possible, secure the reptile. But some care was necessary. It was said that the akòma is remarkably strong; and, although quiet and inoffensive generally, it is very dangerous when really roused. According to some it would erect its head, stand on its tail, and angrily pursue any human being who dared to provoke it, falling down with great force on his shoulder before biting him. Others said that it would strike both fangs and claws into its victim and speedily put an end to his existence. Its ordinary food was declared to be rats, wild fowl, and other creatures, which it first kills by crushing and then covers with saliva before swallowing. Such were some of the stories with which we were entertained.

Arrived at the place where it was said to be, I alighted from the palanquin and began to look around, having previously seen to the loading and priming of the carbine. The stillest silence prevailed while two or

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three of the boldest men walked stealthily forward to point him out. Yes ! There he was, a villainous-looking monster, apparently asleep, coiled up among the bushes with his great flat head in the centre of the circle. The gun was loaded with several pistol bullets. Luckily it was perhaps ; for the duck shot sent into him at the next discharge only just penetrated his thick scaly skin. Advancing to within a few yards I raised the gun. Bang ! Away ran the onlookers for their lives. Peering through the smoke which was slowly rolling away from the mass I could just see the head coming towards me. Enough ! I bolted too. This caused a second stampede. But it was a groundless alarm. After retreating a yard or two, I felt ashamed, and coming cautiously back I thought I saw that the creature was incapable of doing serious harm. To make sure, however, I fired again, and then there was no mistake. The serpent's back was broken at the first discharge. What I saw was only the gradual sinking down of the head, which could no longer be held erect.

And now began the work of securing the spoil and bearing it away. First we got a long pole and satisfied ourselves that the thing was really dead or incapable of further mischief. But I had to drag it right out into the path before anyone else would touch it. Then it was put on the shoulders of two of the men to be taken by a back way to our lodging in the town, as we were afraid of its causing too much excitement if too openly brought in. Walking on ahead I thought that all was over, and that we had nothing to do, but go quietly home again. But all at once there was a great shout behind, followed by a rapid rush of fleeing men. The creature had wriggled, and the cold shiny skin of its

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ugly head had touched the cheek of one of the bearers ! They shrieked out and threw it down in dismay. There it lay on the path twisting about, roaring awfully, and making a most unearthly croaking in its throat. All were now afraid to approach it. The poor fellow whose face had been touched by the serpent's skin was positively green with fright ; and it was not until I had dragged it some distance by the tail a second time, and a great dispute had arisen as to which of the two bearers should carry the reptile by that part of its body, that the strange procession could be induced to move on again.

In a short time the akòma was brought into the yard and stretched along the verandah. It was a medium-sized specimen, about nine feet long and as thick round in the middle as the calf of a man's leg. On each side of its body was a long yellow, black and reddish chain on a brownish ground, and near the extremity of its tail were two abortive claws, like the anal hooks of the boa constrictor. Muscular motion did not cease till long after it was dead. Although tied to a post by a stout rope and held firmly by two strong men, it could not be held straight, and even wriggled mightily when everything from within was extracted.

There were many of these monsters in the neighbourhood, and I could have secured other specimens as natural curiosities ; but it could not be done without impairing my influence with the people and impeding the work I had come to do. It would not have been prudent to have gone right in the teeth of popular prejudice and superstition ; so I was obliged to desist. Our worthy host was terrified at the sight of the creature, and fled from it in great alarm. He entreated that it might be taken away. In deference to him the body

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was got rid of as speedily as possible and buried secretly in the bush the same night, and nothing of the kind was taken near him again.

The Sabbath brought much more congenial occupation than killing serpents and trying to prepare and preserve the skins for the inspection of curious friends. The church, which had been recently enlarged, was crowded with people, who had been brought from all the surrounding parts. These were mostly poor ignorant peasants who would much rather have been let alone to work in the rice fields, lounge about in the town and neighbourhood, or, better still, squat in their uncomfortable and unhealthy houses or outside in the brilliant sunshine. But the governor would not let them have their own way thus. Being a good man, desirous of seeing the people really prosperous and having, moreover, no scruples as to the use of compulsion in religious matters, he had exercised his own judgment as to the best way of making and improving Christians by exerting a constant pressure on the doubtful to attend the worship of God.

I preached with a great feeling of depression, and almost despaired of accomplishing much good. The people seemed so stolid and ignorant, and mentally incapable of receiving even the plainest and most simple of messages, and I knew that their minds were steeped in superstition. But I did my best, and then left them to the care of those who, however wrong in their methods, would, with God's help, be able to do something towards their spiritual and moral improvement.

Getting away again was a great difficulty, at least in the direction I wanted to go. The men turned stupid and refused to advance a step further. Some of them

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had got it into their heads that we were not to go beyond Ivòngo, and, when we arrived there, gave trouble. One was discharged, another ran away, and the rest came on with much difficulty. Now they all positively declined to proceed, and, after I had done some hours of teaching on the Tuesday, they made known their determination. They had heard dreadful stories of the difficult road they were asked to travel. Everybody gave it a bad name and loudly exclaimed against it. They thought, too, that what I might hear about the churches further to the north would lead me to undertake a still longer journey, and they feared they would not be able to be home in time for their annual feast, which they would not miss on any account.

Now here was a fix, I wanted to get back to my wife and children quite as much as they did to theirs ; but I did not like the look of giving up because of a difficult bit of road or a little longer delay. I knew that calling them together and making an appeal to the whole body would be useless because they were afraid of one another. So after waiting a while two of the men were called in, and when they had been talked to a little they were asked to give a plain answer to the question, Will you or will you not go ? Replying in the negative, they were presented with their wages and told to depart in any direction they thought fit. Then I waited to see what effect that would have on the others, but soon found that that sort of thing would not do at all. Many more were anxious to relieve me of their valuable services on the same terms, and soon I should have been left with scarcely enough men to get me home. I took it easy for a few hours, but no change in the aspect of affairs occurred. A few of the discontented peeped in

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occasionally to see how I was really taking it and to suggest, perhaps, that they too would like their money ; but none of my most trusted men volunteered to come to my assistance. Indeed, there was reason to fear that they were as deeply involved in the conspiracy as the rest. Clearly the high horse would not carry me, I must come down to a lower one.

Two or three of the most likely fellows were now called in, one by one, smoothed down a bit the right way and asked as a personal favour not to desert me in this extremity. After some hesitation they each privately declared that they would follow me whithersoever I desired to go, but begged that I would not tell their companions, or they would get into sad trouble. They were thanked and were asked which of the others also would be likely to give their consent to accompany me on the journey. Oh ! so-and-so, and so-and-so. These were in turn called in, talked to in the same way, and likewise gained over. This went on till only a few of the malcontents remained to be persuaded. I could now afford to be more independent with these, one or two of whom were doubtless the leaders of the strike, as they refused to budge an inch further. They were told that all their friends had agreed to go (at which they appeared surprised) and were quietly requested to please themselves, inasmuch as others could be found to supply their places.

It is astonishing what a difference a division in a hostile camp makes. Finding themselves thus put aside, these " staunch adherents " (who had formerly vowed they would never leave me, but had unfortunately lost their opportunity of inducing their friends to join them in going off in a body) desired to be

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members of the majority again, and they quickly came as before to profess undying devotion. As I could not really afford to lose their services they were once more accepted, though not with any marks of gratitude or delight. The generous governor had sent down abundance of rice and poultry to assist me in the conversion of these refractory men, but I did not use them for the purpose. When, however, all had consented to carry me further, the provisions were distributed. Then there was great rejoicing, and everyone went off to sit round a smoky fire and stuff himself to the full by way of preparation for the morrow's work.

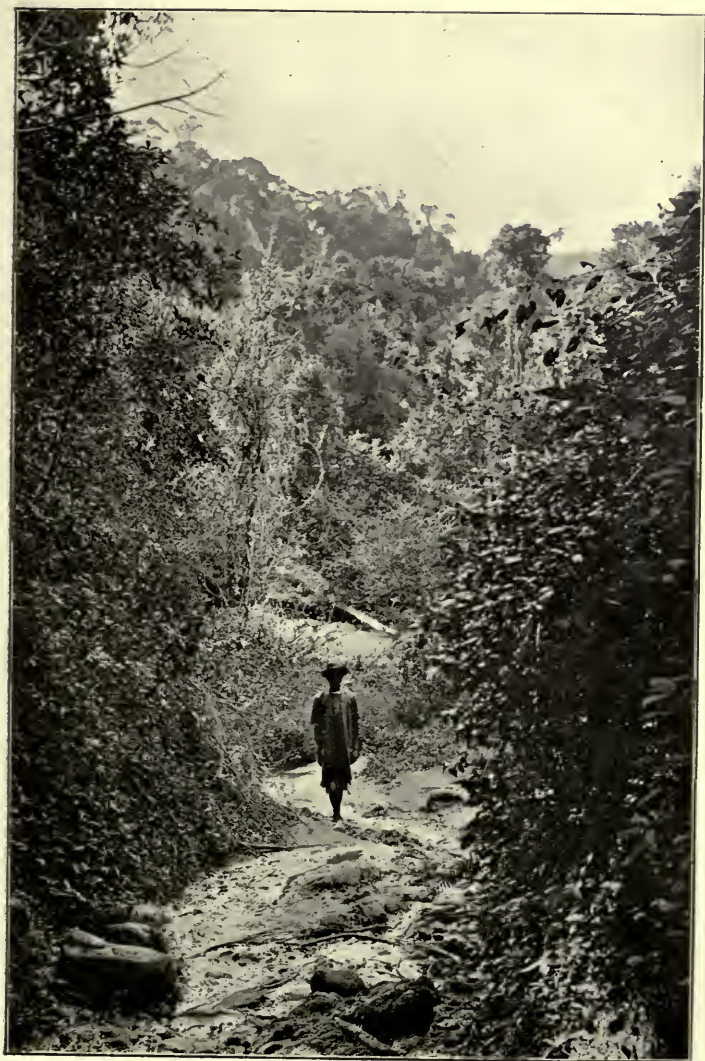
In the morning there were no defections, and the men paddled down the river, singing the song of "Is there any there?" in great spirits, as if there had been no trouble, and no prospect of a difficult road before them. A long walk on the beach north-east of the port of Maròantsètra brought us to the banks of the Màsin-dràno. This wide river was crossed at the junction of two large branches in a dangerously rickety canoe, and we arrived at Andrànofòtsy before dark. Thence, in a day or two, we reached a place at the foot of the forest-clad mountains we had to cross. We were up before the dawn next morning. The wooded valley up which we had been coming had gradually narrowed, and the road had become extremely difficult. For half a day we went almost due north up the river which finds its way into the bay east of Navàhana, crossing and re-crossing it more than twenty times. On getting nearer its source, where it was still a broad rushing stream, we left it, and, striking a little more to the right, clambered up the great hill, on the top of which Radàma I. had set up a memorial stone. This is the highest part

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of the pass and is more than 1,800 feet above sea level. Here we rested for only a quarter of an hour, and took some refreshment that we had brought with us. On the branches of the trees, which stood apart from the surrounding mass of vegetation, were many small pieces of rubber which had been placed there as votive offerings by the seekers for this valuable article of trade. A few of them I secured as legitimate spoils for curious friends. Taking them seemed a dreadful thing to the men; but when they were informed by the guides that pieces of money were often put in and around the tree instead of rubber, they instantly made a rush to the place, and, searching about, succeeded in finding some of them, to the value perhaps of fourpence. So much for their scruples about disturbing sacred things.

Starting again, we descended for some distance, then struggled up Tsi-àfakambòà—not climbable by a dog—and began a very precipitous descent towards the east. Going a very little way we met a stream that flows north-east, and we followed its course, crossing and recrossing it as we had done the one just left behind on the southern slope of the mountain. Half an hour before sunset we reached Tantòmboka, a little village of five houses on an open space on the left bank of the stream. We had been more than eleven hours in coming through the forest, and had not lingered on the way. If we had not hurried on we should have been benighted amongst the trees.

Tired and hungry, we hailed with joy the resting place, nor wished to stir out of it until the Sabbath had passed away, and had invigorated and made us fit for the work of another day. This was, alas! denied us.



A FOREST ROAD AND BRIDGE.

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The morning came and the heavy mists rolled across the mountain tops, penetrating into the beautiful valley down which we were to go, and making any forward movement a cheerless and uninviting thing. Fain would we have remained in the village and had a quiet service there when the weather cleared up a bit; but hunger forced us on, or rather the prospect of it. No rice could be bought; and as none had been brought with us on we went, along the narrow path, through the tall rushes, and among the trees, zigzag fashion, crossing the river again and again. Meanwhile the mists had cleared away, the sun had found its way into the valley, and travelling had become excessively warm. Several hours brought us to another village where a similar experience awaited us. So we went on once more, and when night came it found us at Antsàhavòlo—the field of canes—with the tent pitched at the northern end of the village.

This was a street of some six and thirty houses with the usual raised floors, and of so diminutive a size that it was impossible to find a suitable lodging-place. The stretcher and other baggage could scarcely have been got into any one of them. All was tolerably quiet when we arrived, but our coming soon created a stir. The hungry men were not slow in searching about for food. Ere long the rice and meat were brought and chaf-fering began. The cook bought me some meat and prepared it for supper. Strangely close and compact though its texture looked, being also of a very dark red colour, and suspicious though it smelt, I managed to make a slight meal, then lay down and was soon fast asleep. But not for long did I repose. The hard travelling of the last two days, the intense heat of the sun

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in the valley, and last, but not least, the horrid tainted beef, had done their work, and a sharp attack of sickness ensued. Troubled all through the night, I was in the morning very weak and ill. I had taken brandy, chlorodyne, and opium to no purpose, and there I lay alone in the tent, a sorry sight, thinking of wife and bairns, and the very poor prospect before me. At length the men, who had been waiting about an hour or two, lifted up the curtain and, peeping in, gave me a cheering salute. Then I thought, "Come now, this won't do. Try it again." So up I got, and by nine we were off again.

A couple of hours' exertion in striving to keep clear of the dangerous canes in a thick forest of bamboos was quite enough. I arrived at the tiny village of Màromandla altogether exhausted. Having the stretcher put up in a house only just big enough to contain it, I got into bed once more and determined to save time by thoroughly doctoring myself up. Castor oil, aided afterwards by a little tincture of opium, and a good night's rest accomplished wonders. I was better towards evening, then fell asleep and woke in the morning a new man. Rising early, and full of gratitude and good spirits, I was on the way again about seven. In a few hours we came to another village in which were some two dozen houses. There was a building said to be used for public worship, but no pastor, no deacons, no church members, and not a soul able to read. The headman and his friends appeared to be quite afraid of religion. He declined my request to assemble the young people that they might be presented with a book that would teach them to read; and the children themselves were so shy that I had to run after

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them and make a capture or two before getting them to accept the very few lesson books I could spare. The road to this village was exceedingly difficult to travel on—indeed it had been very bad all the way. It was not easy work coming up the valley to the north and crossing the mountains into that opening towards the north-east. But the difficulty increased as we came up. There were two things especially that made it so, the well-nigh impenetrable thickets of tall reeds, and the immense stretches of formidable bamboo canes. Through the dense forest of large trees there was a passably good track, and with a little care in dodging the branches and steering among the great trunks the traveller on the elevated seat of the palanquin would come to no harm nor suffer much annoyance; but he had to look out for himself when going through the reeds and the canes.

The former are certainly not hurtful, as they are neither thorny nor hard; but they nevertheless cause great annoyance. The reeds themselves were some six to nine feet in height, and their nodding leaves made a pretty arch over the narrow path. This arch was generally high enough to admit of a man passing under by bending just a little, but sometimes it was so low as to require a considerable stoop to clear oneself from it. Just imagine what it must be, riding on a palanquin. Your head must either be forcing itself through the great mass of leaves or your back must be bent nearly double, and your nose right on to the shoulders of the oily-smelling bearers; and this not for a few moments, but sometimes for hours together and in a pouring rain! It was really a wonder that my poor back was not broken. As it was, I had the back-ache for days.

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afterwards. Luckily the reeds were not strong enough to bruise the head or sharp enough to scratch the face. But the everlasting drip, drip, of the water from the wet leaves, even when the rain had ceased, down the nicely warm neck and back, made the thing intensely disagreeable. Then, again, a nasty leech would occasionally shift its position from one of the same leaves to the face or the bare hand, and leave a wound from which flowed quite a little stream of blood. They were a terror to the men. I often saw the poor fellows stoop to pick them off their naked legs and feet, which speedily assumed quite a gory appearance.

But the reeds were as nothing compared with the thorny and prickly canes. They hung over the path in all directions, and were a constant source of anxiety. Being very hard and so sharp that detached portions were sometimes used as knives, great care was required to avoid sustaining injury. The men's feet suffered severely from broken pieces strewn along the way, and often hidden from sight under the long grass. It was a perfect marvel that my exalted perch did not procure for me many a cut and scratch. But I did not come off quite free, as I could not avoid a few scratches. These did not improve my appearance, as they no doubt made me look as if I had been engaging in an undignified and unseemly brawl. Viewed from another aspect, however, and considering the extreme difficulty of the whole task, and the comparatively little injury received in getting through, folks might have appropriately dubbed me "the artful dodger." I could not have been offended if they had, for in the better sense the name had been justly earned. It required no small amount of art to steer safely through

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the dense mass of trees, thick brushwood, dripping reeds and formidable canes. "Tall, graceful bamboos," indeed! I cannot think dispassionately of their beauty again. And as for grace in the other sense, it was not much they bestowed on me. Oh! dear, what work it was! Among the reeds the helmet was occasionally thrust down over the eyes, and the head made into an extempory battering ram in very desperation. But that would not do among the canes. No! no! I was keeping the eyes ever open, and never ceasing to bend, duck, and twist in all directions, to keep out of the way of very dangerous obstacles.

But we had got over these troubles for a time. Resuming our journey we came upon the river again, and in a great bend of it saw some large crocodiles basking in the sun on rocks in the centre of the stream. There was no shooting any, however. I tried with my pop-gun of a carbine, but the bullet went nowhere near, and the creatures shot into the water like lightning. We spent the night at another small village, in one of the tiny houses there. I had scarcely any sleep for sundry banging sounds, caused by the head of one of the men coming into repeated contact with a tin box. He had squeezed himself into the place so as to keep me company and had thereby become a perfect martyr. Being on the floor, the fleas preyed on his nice sleek body, and he had no room to turn and catch them. Getting no rest, we rose long before the dawn, had breakfast and were off with just sufficient light to guide us over the low hills that lay between us and the sea. Gaining the summit we saw the ocean once more. There it was, resting peacefully, with the rising sun kissing its ruddy, smiling face.

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What a picture of joyous hope and blessed expectation ! Cheered with the brightness of the morning beams, we descended blithely into the plains and, turning to the right, struck away south-east, passing through a stretch of most beautiful bamboos and the rofia, fontsy and sago palms. But the numerous groves of mangos with their fragrant smell and welcome shade, and the pretty clumps of other fine wide-spreading trees, made the journey to the coast especially agreeable. Just before getting there, however, we came to a more level and less interesting country, and finally passed through a slimy swamp to the shore. Going along the beach for several hours, we struck inland once more, still keeping southwards. Wading through another offensive tide-washed mangrove swamp and avoiding with difficulty the troublesome and intricate aerial roots of dwarfed and stunted trees, we wound round the spurs of the hills which here stretched towards the sea. It took some time to make the circuit of these and to pass over the marshy spaces between them. We were getting thoroughly tired when we turned the corner of the last headland and saw the town we were making for in the midst of the rice fields below. It appeared to be close at hand, but the men had a most wearying trudge, turning in and out among the marshes, before they reached it.

The governor did not happen to be in the enclosure at the time, and the soldiers hanging about the gates did not care to put themselves out of the way to go and find him ; so we proceeded at once to the town to seek a house for ourselves. In front of a solitary umbrella stall set out with the usual uninviting chunks of beef,

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stood a great tall man whose appearance was neither clean nor dignified. Nevertheless, I could not resist the idea that he was the very man we wanted. Of him we enquired about a house, and were directed up the street to the *lapa*, a place set apart in every principal town for the Queen's goods, and any of her friends who might be passing that way. To the *lapa* we went, whither the man himself soon followed. Yes, he was the governor right enough, and after a short chat about the object of my journey and the religious condition of the people in his district, he and his staff took their departure for a time, leaving me to get a little rest.

Andrànovèlona must be a very unhealthy town, surrounded as it is by pestilential marshes and extensive rice fields, which appear to be always under water. Great depression seemed to hang over the place whilst we were there. Many of the houses were empty, as the inhabitants had either been destroyed or frightened by the terrible small-pox. A funereal silence and gloomy stillness prevailed. Not a soul or scarcely a soul stirred abroad. Even the boisterous voice of the rum-drinker was hushed, and the very dogs held their peace. It was not long before I got a touch of the horrors. I would fain have fled ; but stern duty kept me waiting. I was thoroughly dejected and, to add to it all, there was nothing to do, as what people remained were scattered abroad attending to their rice fields and other things, and could not be got together until Sunday came. There was nothing for it but waiting as patiently as we could. I did a little quiet teaching and doctoring ; received a few visitors ; and, when the sun shone out a little, took a short walk or went to see the governor.

We had a school examination on the Saturday, and

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the next day I ministered to about 500 people in the church, when I found great pleasure in preaching from the story of the Philippian jailer ; and in the afternoon more to the professedly Christian part of the assembly from the words " Fight the good fight of faith " (1 Tim. vi. 12). This was about all that could then be done for these benighted souls who had been left for years with only a dim glimmer of Gospel day to guide them into the sunlight of God's love.

In the morning we began to retrace our steps. But little can be said concerning the return journey to Maròà. After going a bit further north to visit a town on the coast, we turned inland, crossed the small forest to the west, struck into the great jungle of reeds and bamboo, entered the larger and wider strip of forest, and arrived towards sunset at Màromandlà. Taking up my quarters once more in the house in which I lay sick, and feeling grateful for a safe return thus far, I passed a good night. Being much refreshed, we dived into the bush again ; passed alongside the river, dined at Antsàhavòlo (but not this time on tainted meat), climbed over the hills, struck the river again, began the crossing and recrossing process, and arrived at Antsàmbalàhy by dusk.

In the morning I started on foot to the next resting place, but gave up near the end of the journey. We did not get in till nearly five. I was hungry, weary and crippled, having damaged my knee-cap, and must have looked a pretty object. The boots I had on were now ruined ; from the front of one my toes peeped slyly out, while the saturated and disconnected sole of the other plopped on the stones most uncomfortably at every step. Needless to say the experiment was not

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repeated. The next day, though not liking the prospect, I took to squeezing, twisting and bobbing on the top of the palanquin again. I was carried up the valley and over and over the stream to the foot of Tsi-àfak-ambòà, up which I was forced to scramble, as being carried was out of the question. Mounting once more, I was taken up the less steep hill of Radàma I. and set down at the top. Thence, after a hasty lunch and a short rest, we descended into the valley, but did not succeed in getting to the next village until some time after dark.

We reached Isòaneràna in a couple more days ; but I was fairly bowled over by that time ; the long walks, the difficult ride, and the other trials and privations of the way had been too much for me, and I must needs stay longer than I wished to gain some strength for the long and untried inland journey back to the capital. During my absence encouraging progress had been made in teaching both the adults and the children ; but I could do nothing more to help them, and lay on my stretcher for some days, feeling very weak and ill. My kind hosts helped me much, however ; and I began to improve, and even to begin preparing for the start. Then something happened to hasten the preparations. In came a messenger from Antanànarivo with the sad intelligence of the deaths of two children belonging to the mission families, and of the serious illness of our own dear babe, and I was requested to come back at once ; but the man had come a long way, and had been more than a month trying to find me.

Of course not a moment was lost. The bearers were called together, and arrangements made immediately for our departure on the morrow. Our friends made

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no effort to detain me. They gave me their heartfelt sympathy, and facilitated matters to the best of their ability. In the evening they sent down eight large sacks of rice for the journey through the forest, and, when I bade them farewell in the morning, put five dollars into my hand towards the additional expenses of travel.

We were up long before daylight ; but could not get off for some time, being delayed by a few of the men who found it difficult to part from their new acquaintances in the town. At last we were off, and after going along the shore for some considerable distance turned inland, and before nightfall reached a small village at the foot of the first great range of mountains. Here it was necessary to make provision for the four days' journey through the forest, as no place would be found where we could buy food until we got to the other side. The eight bags of rice had been distributed amongst the men. This they thought amply sufficient. But finding the carriage of rice outside their stomachs a very irksome business, a few wiseacres made haste to change and improve the arrangement by carrying it inside. The result was empty rice bags, equally empty stomachs, and great weariness ; and, long before they reached the place where the pangs of hunger could be appeased, they could scarcely totter for very weakness.

The first experience of the new road was discouraging in the extreme. A few minutes after starting we reached the great wall of rock to the west of the village and began to climb. The rain, which had long been threatening, now came down in torrents, and did not cease for hours. Two of these hours were passed in reaching the top of the mountain. It was really dreadful.

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The ascent was very steep and the mud excessively soft and slippery. The men could scarcely stand, and kept slipping back at almost every step. It must have been awful work for them. Even the quietest and best-tempered fellows grumbled, and several quarrelled and almost fought with each other. Perhaps I should have grumbled and quarrelled too, had it not been I was so desirous of encouraging the sufferers to bear up bravely and get on as well as they could.

After this great tug the road slightly improved, but it never became much better ; and towards the close of the fourth day it was well-nigh impassable. We then became entangled in the canes again. These were not growing in tolerably dry soil, but were springing up in beautiful confusion from a foul muddy bog, out of which some of the men did not extricate themselves till long after dark. We had gone before, and just as the darkness was closing in around us, we had found an open space and lit up a bonfire. This was a beacon of hope to our despairing friends who were still struggling to get out of the slough of despond. They were so faint and weary that some of them actually wanted to lay themselves down in the mud and try to go supperless to sleep. Judge of their joy when they saw through the canes and brushwood the flickering light of the distant bivouac fire ! Recognising this they made a desperate attempt and all got safely through.

The great fire in camp was a capital institution, and made the evenings pass much more pleasantly than they would otherwise have done. After scrambling and climbing all day through the unusually still and silent forest, the men began to put up the tent and make preparations for the night. What sounds had been

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heard during the reign of light, such as the twitterings and songs of birds, and the melancholy barking howl of the babacoots, gradually died away as the darkness thickened, and our ears were greeted with that increasingly shrill whirring, buzzing noise of insects, peculiar only to night in a tropical forest. The next thing after the putting up of the tent was the gathering of wood, and the making up of the big fire. There was always some difficulty, however, about this ; but when once it was fairly alight and the rice boiling and bubbling away in the pots by its side, the weary workers enjoyed the cheerful blaze and the pleasant glowing warmth, and as the flames shot merrily upwards into the darkness and lit up the surrounding gloom, they laughingly talked of the events of the day by way of preparation for those of the morrow.

On the first occasion we had reading and prayers by the bonfire's ruddy light. It was the Sabbath, and this was about all that could be done to make it any other than ordinary days. I was too tired to give an address, and the men were too exhausted to listen, had such a thing been attempted. On the third night one of the two Mozambiques in our company told us the story of his being captured by the Arabs in Africa and sold into slavery at Mojangà. He grew quite eloquent as he proceeded with it, and much interested the little congregation sitting round the fire.

The substance of the narrative was this :—One day, the speaker and his brother were sitting together in the family hut, when their father came in with the alarming news that the enemy was at hand. Hearing this, they hastily seized some weapons and prepared to assist their parent in defending themselves and what little

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property they possessed, but their brave resistance was in vain. The poor old man was shot dead in their presence, and they themselves were quickly disarmed and marched off with a gang of others to the coast. Each of these poor wretches had a wooden prong securely fastened to his neck to prevent any attempt at escape. On the way the eldest brother who was absent from home at the time of the capture of our friend tried to effect a rescue ; but like the affectionate and devoted father, he met his death at the hands of the Arabs. Not long after, however, the youngest brother took advantage of a favourable opportunity, and, slipping off, saved himself from their clutches.

When the gang reached the coast the captive and a number of others were put on board a dhow bound for Madagascar. Being a sharp lad he managed to persuade the sailors to give him a top place in the slave quarters in the hold, as he dreaded the filth and stench of the lower regions. What he said respecting these is too horrible for publication. Many of the poor creatures died, and as their deaths were discovered, which sometimes was not for many hours afterwards, their emaciated bodies were thrown overboard into the sea. At last the dhow reached the neighbourhood of Mojangà, but a British man-of-war was in the bay. The surviving slaves were now delighted to see the anxiety and terror of their persecutors. All was consternation on board the vessel. She was hurriedly put back, and was soon far out at sea again, having unfortunately been unobserved. She beat about for two or three days, and after a while ventured to draw nigh another port on the west coast of the island. Lo ! the British friend of the slave was there before her. Then there was

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more fear, more excitement, more hard work at the sails, and away they went again before the wind, whilst all the time the slaves in the hold were suffering more severely. At last the bay of Mojangà was found to be free of cruisers, and the wicked owners landed the remnant of their miserable cargo and sold them to the merchants. Among others, the unlucky reciter came into the possession of one of the Hovas of the town, and ere long was taken up into the interior.

We got clear of the sombre forest with great difficulty. All the bearers were well-nigh exhausted and several of the weaker and more unfortunate ones were really ill. These latter we could scarcely get along at all, let alone the burdens they carried. One or two of the others had to be occasionally drafted off to their assistance and the articles they carried had to be distributed amongst the rest. This caused much grumbling on the part of those whose work was thus necessarily made harder; but no notice was taken of the complaints, as neither baggage nor bearers could be left to fate in the woody depths. Now and then I feared that some of the poor fellows would not get out alive; and it need not be added that all of us were mightily relieved when, on the morning of Thursday the fifth day, we left the forest and all its trials and unpleasant associations behind us and struck straight across the great stretch of bare elevated land to the small village of Mandrèmake.

After getting a little rice and resting for two hours, we went on again over the bleak moors in a very heavy mist; and towards the close of the day, came to the edge of the great plateau and looked down into an extensive and very deep valley. There was a splendid

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view of rounded hills, irregular-shaped mountains, deep ravines and broad valleys, with here and there a stream running to the south-east. The spot on which we stood was over 3,000 feet above the sea level, and, if the good aneroid we carried could be relied on, nearly 2,000 feet higher than the valley below. Descending quickly into this, we hastened along and reached Manàkona half an hour after the darkness had set in. Entering the *lapa*, a nice large house with walls made of bamboo and the roof of the leaves of the travellers' tree, we made ourselves comfortable for the night and were soon sound asleep.

We had scarcely slept off our weariness by the morning, and did not get off before eight ; but ere the evening had closed in we had arrived at Mándritsàra, the chief town in the district, a place of about two hundred houses. The men were expecting a little gratuity on reaching this important place " to wash off the mud," as they said, which had adhered to their bodies in the course of their dirty trudge through some parts of the forest ; and they had informed me that the present of a bullock would help them to perform the operation. Accordingly, as they thoroughly deserved encouragement, a man was sent on ahead to apprise the governor of our coming and to ask him to get one of his friends to sell us a beast. The latter part of the commission turned out to be a great mistake.

On our arrival I was shown into a house, and then informed that the governor was waiting to receive me. But a visit just then was quite out of the question, I was unable to do anything but lie flat on my back, and rest as well as I could. Hearing that I was ill the great man and his officers came down, bringing the

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usual present of poultry and rice. Rising with difficulty to receive them, I managed to maintain a not very lively conversation until they saw fit to take their departure. In the meantime, the ox we had enquired for had been selected from the governor's herd and driven to a spot just outside the town for our inspection. It was so lean and altogether such a miserable-looking object that the men entreated me to give them money instead of beef. I gladly did so, and the poor beast was declined with thanks. The sharp owner, our not very kind or cordial friend, had wished to turn an honest penny, and seeing a good opportunity had tried to avail himself of it. After tea had been brought in and I had got rid of some of my weariness, the pastor of the church and one or two others came for a chat, and from them I learned that the people were in about the same sad condition as those in Anònibè; but I could do nothing for them, and was obliged to leave in the morning without promising them any help.

We had a hard day's work, and reached Màritandràno thoroughly done up. My own sickness had continued, and I was thankful to get shelter from the burning heat. Still I had intended pushing on further that day, and should have done so had it not been for the urgent representations of the governor, and for the fact that we needed time to prepare provender for the march through the wilderness lying between that place and the Antsihànaka country. So I consented to remain until the morning, to the great satisfaction of the inhabitants, and the weary sun-stricken, sore-footed bearers, some of whom danced for very joy. I attended the church in the afternoon, though equal to a short address only. There were about a hundred and fifty

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present, including the soldiers of the small garrison. When the service was over, I paid a visit to the governor and then retired to our lodging, where I soon fell asleep. The morning found us all refreshed and much better for the additional half day's rest. Having secured three guides, who were to assist in carrying the baggage, we went again down the valley, and at its southern end looked back over the way we had come. Far in the distance we could see the heights from which we had descended into the lowlands, and a little nearer some of the rough hills we had crossed in our progress south, and here and there a village lay nestling in the valley, with a silvery streak of water meandering by its side, and the little clumps of tamarind and other trees on each bank ; while, scattered over the plain, were the small round specks which I knew to be the large heaps of rice that had reminded me so much of the ricks of hay and stacks of corn in the farmyards at home.

But I could not linger to enjoy the scene and all the pleasant associations it brought to mind. Continuing to go southwards up the gorge, we descended into a tiny narrow vale, dined there, and ascended to the higher ground once more. Crossing the forest on the eastern edge of it and gaining the open country, we found ourselves on the great plateau on which we should have to travel for several days. We had now risen to a height nearly equal to that from which we had at first descended into the valley ; but we still seemed to be in the lowlands, as the long wall of forest-clad mountains to the west appeared fully a thousand feet higher. We gradually ascended, however, as we went south, and in a day or two must have been nearly level with the grand range.

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Our route was now over a succession of high moors and across narrow valleys full of small forest trees, and inhabited by large numbers of the lemur tribe, who made the welkin ring again with their strange cries. Occasionally we came upon some very swampy ground in the valleys ; but, as a rule, no difficulty was experienced in getting across them, while the road over the moors was a delight to the men, who had been accustomed so long to the shifting sand of the sea-shore and the wretched paths of the inland forests. Nevertheless, the journey was trying to them, as the constant travelling had worn the skin off their feet and otherwise incapacitated them for doing hard work.

As I was most anxious to get on, the company was divided on the evening of the second day, and general arrangements for the more rapid advance of one portion. The baggage was repacked, the strongest men selected to carry the indispensables, while the rest of the things were left in charge of the messenger from the capital to be brought on more slowly by those who were weak and ailing. On the morrow we rose very early, took leave of our friends and, taking only one tent with us, started off briskly. The men went along at a very rapid rate and covered many miles before stopping for dinner. This was soon over, and we trudged on again, hoping to reach Ambàtobè by the evening ; but this was found to be impossible, and we continued our journey too long for our comfort and convenience. We had to erect the tent by the miserable light of the lantern, and were, moreover, obliged to be content with a scanty allowance of firewood, for the want of sufficient light to enable us to find more.

In the course of the day we had very nearly come to



A SLIP IN THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND.

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grief in one of the boggy valleys. One of the two men who were carrying the palanquin along a submerged branch laid across a cranky tressle bridge, which stretched over the marsh for a couple of hundred yards or more, slipped suddenly into the muddy water and nearly succeeded in immersing me and his companions. Had not the other relay been close at hand and going before and behind the palanquin in single file, we should to say the least have had a precious ducking. These came speedily to our relief and dexterously extricated us from our awkward position. The poor fellow who slipped off the bridge deserved great praise for his conduct ; for, although he went right under at first and was afterwards nearly up to his neck in the slush, he managed to hold up the palanquin until relieved, thus saving me from a dirty bath.

At length the tent was erected and our supper somehow cooked. Then we lay down to sleep. It was a close pack—sixteen of us within a very small space. But although the men were jammed so closely together, they got little sleep for the cold, and shivered again when the morning light bade them prepare for the work of another day. Their hungry stomachs and the cold blast from the moors made them dread beginning ; but they buckled to with a will, and felt better as the sun rose higher and warmed their almost naked bodies.

We were not long in reaching Ambàtobè—the place of the big stone—but we could not stop there. So we went on, and after a weary day's march, put up the tent again on the moor and packed ourselves in it for the night, rejoicing in the thought that it was for the last time. We were up and away just as the king of day was rising in the east on his royal throne of silver and

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gold. All were in good spirits, because we were approaching a part of the country known to some of the men, and we should be able to tell the exact time of our arrival in the capital. We went along at a good pace and in an hour or two caught sight of the blue waters of Lake Alaotra nestling far in the distance amongst the bare hills. We gradually approached nearer, and after a long tramp succeeded in reaching the Maningòry—here at its source a very large river and dangerous to pass over. We had arrived some time before dark, and could see the people in the houses immediately opposite and others by the side of the water ; but although they were to all appearance within hailing distance and must have seen us, if they did not hear our call, they took not the slightest notice and made no attempt to send over a canoe. We called and shouted and shouted and called until we were hoarse, but the lazy churls made no sign. We should have fired the gun, but the bearer was detained behind. A bitter east wind was blowing on the open plain, which chilled us through and through, and did not improve the state of our minds. The cold and hungry men saw clouds of water fowl hovering over the reeds close by and floating about on many little streams that flowed into the river ; but, had the gun-bearer come up, they could not be approached without a canoe as crocodiles abound in these waters.

The darkness approached and lights began to appear in the town. It was most vexing. We began to think that we should have to encamp on the dreary waste, and try to go to sleep on empty stomachs with plenty of good rice almost within reach, when up came the gun at last. This we discharged thrice. The report awakened

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up our drowsy, questionable friends on the other side. Thinking some great man had made his appearance, and that they might possibly get into serious trouble for their want of common kindness and their marked indisposition to come to his aid, they hastened to make amends by sending off the canoes at once. They were soon on our side of the river, and in the course of half an hour more we were all safely across ; but it was now quite dark, and we got into the town with difficulty. The men did not find it an easy matter to get a house to lodge in, as all the doors were closed against them ; but they did not see the force of waiting, and not being in a very amiable mood they burst open the door of one of the first houses they saw and entered willy nilly. The natives have a very free and easy way of taking temporary possession of one another's houses, and under the circumstances nothing was said.

We got away from this unobliging, unaccommodating place as soon as possible in the morning, and did our best to reach Ambàtondrazàka—the chief town, before nightfall, but the attempt was a complete failure. The men were all too tired. Those carrying the palanquin put me down at Andriba just about dark, and the others did not arrive until a very late hour after leaving one or two comrades sick on the road. I spent a wretched night in a miserably small and unclean hut. For the first time in the course of the journey the stretcher did not come up, so I was forced to make up a bed on the filthy mud floor. Getting no sleep for the close smell and the tormenting bites of the many fleas, I rose long before daylight, assisted the men to get breakfast ready, and was away ere the darkness had been dispersed. After a weary journey over marsh, plain and

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hill, we at length came in sight of the town, but it was long enough before we actually drew near. Then I strained my eyes to catch a glimpse of Mr. Pearse's familiar form coming to meet us. It was to no purpose. The rascal to whom the letter informing our friends of our prospective arrival was entrusted, had never taken it to them, and we got right into their yard before seeing anything of them.

Then, however, all was gladness. "Good news," were the first words we heard. The dear child was recovering. Anxiety was now at an end, and I felt full of gratitude for this new manifestation of Divine favour. The men likewise were pleased, and they were by no means sorry for the short respite they were about to get, for they had been very hard pressed. I attended service in the afternoon, though I took no part in it, and in the evening spent some truly happy, restful hours in the draughty rush house of our friends who had not yet had time to build a better. How the quiet, holy influence of that Christian home seemed to soothe the agitated spirit, calm the troubled waters of the soul, and bring me rest and peace. Home—my own home—was almost reached, and already my heart was going up to God in thanksgiving for His many mercies to me and mine.

And the morrow! How full of good work it was for these two servants of the Master. And how quietly and joyfully they went about it. How could I help envying them their fill of labour, and praying to God ever to strengthen their hands and graciously bless their efforts to advance His cause. It was then, too, I saw Lazarus. He was a poor soldier who had come to the town to die amongst any who might prove his friends.

Journey to Anoníbe and Back

But the people had cast him out and left him to die a loathsome death in a living tomb. No kind hand ministered to him in his dreadful sufferings, and no tear of fond affection fell by the side of his hard and stony bed. All had forsaken him and fled. No, not so ; loving disciples of the Great Physician were near. Our benevolent friends found him under an old mat and a few reeds in one of the by-ways of the town. He was a sickening sight full of offensively smelling sores and fast rotting to death. They did not pass him by. Like the good Samaritan whom the Saviour praised, they immediately took compassion on the poor diseased outcast, and brought him to an outhouse connected with their premises. There they nursed him, fed him, and clothed him, and after a time restored him by God's blessing to comparative health and strength. He then went to church and the people called him "Lazarus," because he was as one risen from the dead. Well might they do so, and flock in crowds to see the physician who had effected so wonderful a cure. When we saw him, the man was going about apparently almost as well as ever, a most successful walking advertisement to the genuineness of missionary kindness and the efficacy of foreign medicine.

In the course of the day all the men arrived safely. Even one who had been utterly prostrated with fever managed to come on with the rest ; but as he was still very ill, our kind friends promised to take care of him until he became convalescent and able to pursue his journey to the south. Calling on the governor in the morning and wishing my warm-hearted hosts farewell, we started once more. After a few days further travel we came within sight of the capital. Then what a shout

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of joy the men gave, and how my heart beat at the thought of the welcome at hand. In a little while we had passed Ambàtofòtsy ; then the market of Asabòtsy and the villages on the familiar north road, and ere long the city was reached and we were home at last ! We had travelled more than a thousand miles and had been over three months away. Moreover with the exception of the one man left at Ambàtondrazàka, who came up a few days afterwards, all had returned safely ; and an additional and not the least cause of gratitude was found on our arrival, for the sick babe was gradually but surely recovering and the house was full of gladness.

CHAPTER VI

A COUNTRY DISTRICT

NEARLY a couple of months after my return, the committee proposed that I should take charge of the Tslafàhy district. So anxious were we to get settled in a station of our own that the very next day I went down to make preparations, and on June 5 we removed from town; though it was not till May following in the new year, 1877, however, that the directors confirmed the appointment. But, although we were eager for the change, it was not without apprehension that we entered upon the new work. This was in consequence of the character of the Palace Church evangelist, Rakòtovào, with whom my predecessor had already disagreed, ostensibly because of his unwillingness to lend him money to buy a slave. The position was peculiar. As has been already explained, the country districts were attached to their respective town churches by the pastors of which, in conjunction with the missionary in charge, they were superintended. Tslafàhy was the southern part of the Ambòhipòtsy district, and had been separated from it, like some other similar districts, to admit of its being worked more effectively by a resident missionary. But when the Palace Church had been established some time and had grown strong in numbers and influence, the members, including the Queen and Prime Minister and their

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principal officers of State—as was only natural—wished to take up a work that they might call their own. Instead, however, of making arrangements for a separate district, they fixed upon centres in other districts, and appointed some of the first batch of students of the college to occupy them and act as evangelists or superintendents. Thus a difficult and delicate situation was created, and it will readily be seen that if the agents thus appointed—who were commonly known as “Queen’s messengers”—were not good and wise men, or were for some reason or other inimical to the foreign missionary, deplorable results might follow.

Now in most cases the plan worked out fairly well, notwithstanding the specially independent position the evangelist had secured ; but in the case of Rakòtovào the opposite was the result, for he was a man who magnified his office, and was, moreover, of a most truculent and domineering disposition.

Things looked ominous from the first. Our reception was by no means cordial, probably because the Queen’s messenger showed no inclination to welcome the newcomers, and never went near their house for days. However, we took no notice of that, and were at special pains to show a conciliatory and friendly spirit. Apparently we succeeded, and for a time all went well. But the man soon exhibited his natural disposition; particularly when he discovered that I was not prepared to pay his expenses everywhere and give him the Society’s money to pay out to the teachers as he pleased. He began to be easily offended, to keep away from the mission house, to govern both churches and schools independently, and finally to withdraw from association with pastors and teachers outside his

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own district. Then he preceeded to act arbitrarily in the suspension of pastors and teachers on his own authority ; and when I felt bound to expostulate with him, he became an open enemy.

I have not the heart, however, and it would answer no good purpose, to tell of all this man's irritating conduct and painful proceedings. Suffice it to say that he forced me at last to make a personal appeal to the Prime Minister.

His Excellency granted me an interview, and received me with his usual courtesy, and listened patiently to all that I had to say. Then he smiled, and leaning over the table he entered on a very friendly chat, in the course of which he said that Rakòtovào would be removed in a short time, and that if I wished he would remove him at once. Moreover, he added that if I preferred it no other successor should be appointed. I assured him in reply that I did not wish anything unpleasant to happen to the Queen's messenger, that I only desired to live at peace with him and all men, and to be able to carry on my work with the same liberty that other missionaries were enjoying ; and as to the suggestion that no successor should be appointed I should regret it, as it would mark me out at once as a person unable or unwilling to join with the agents of the Palace Church in the doing of Christian work.

His Excellency seemed satisfied with this, and, after a few more words of kindness and good will, he bade me God speed. No change was immediately made ; but when a short time had elapsed the man was removed, and one of my old students was appointed in his place.

Troubles at Tsìafàhy, however were not confined to

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these arising out of difficulties with the representative of the Palace Church. Unhappily there was much sickness in the family. Indeed we appeared to be always calling in the doctor and having to depend on the valuable assistance of friends who kindly came down to our assistance.

There was the very serious illness of my wife. We thought at one time that the patient was actually past help and nearing her end. But providentially the patience and skill of Dr. Guldberg, of the Norwegian Missionary Society, averted the dreaded catastrophe. These repeated attacks of sickness rendered necessary several visits to Antanànarivo, where we could the more readily obtain the advice and assistance required. This interfered of course with work, but I was frequently able to get into the district and the temporary residence in town was sometimes convenient for attendance at meetings.

One of these was a memorable gathering. It was a meeting of the Native Missionary Society then recently formed, and the Prime Minister had been induced, after some hesitation, to take the chair. His speech thrilled the assembly. He told us of an expedition he led in the old dark days into the district whither the missionaries being set apart that day were going. He said that the male inhabitants of the towns and villages were all put to the sword—the streets running red with their blood—and that the women and children were captured and made slaves, and their houses destroyed by fire. Then turning to the outgoing missionaries he told them that they too were starting off to obey a command; but it was a command of another kind. They were not to kill, but to make

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alive. They were not to use their authority to harass and spoil the people amongst whom their lot was to be cast. They were to nourish and cherish them ; to show them that the religion of Jesus Christ was one of gentleness and kindness, of love and mercy.

The effect was electrical. The people listened to the address with sympathetic enthusiasm, and kept approving it by a series of ecstatic clicks, equivalent to the hearty cheers of an English audience, everybody feeling that Rainilàiarivòny's heart was in the right place, and that there was no mistake about his entire approval of the aims and objects of the society.

During one of our sojourns in the town, I went down to Tslafàhy, and had a very unpleasant experience of robbers. I had just gone for one day, intending to come back the next morning. Tired out with all sorts of items of business I went to bed upstairs as usual and slept like a top through the night, and was awakened at an early hour by the ringing of a bell. It was the servant left in charge trying to attract my attention. I went down at once to find that the robbers had dug through the sun-dried bricks under my study window, and practically cleared out the place. The hall was stripped, the sitting room ransacked, and the mattress on the sofa had been ripped up to provide a bag to carry away some of the booty. The rascals had not had time to remove everything right away, for some of the articles were found just outside the house ready for further removal.

Strange to say, some of the bearers who brought me down, and who were sleeping on the floor in the dining room, said they never heard a sound. Even if they did hear they must have adopted the usual native custom

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of covering themselves up in their lambas and remaining perfectly still, lest they should get killed. So the robbers had it all their own way. A complaint was made, and the police were instructed to investigate the affair ; but, as was expected, nothing came of it, and we never got anything back. In the meantime the fellows became bolder, and attacked houses in the capital itself ; and lots of property was lost by the foreign residents. Protection was sometimes asked for, and watchmen provided ; but these worthies mostly contented themselves with shouting " Who goes there ? " at intervals, and then going to sleep again under their lambas and on the mats they brought with them. One night the robbers actually killed the watchman outside the store of one of the merchants, and then entered and bore away the safe—a member of the firm being upstairs asleep all the time. After this traders and others provided themselves with firearms, and for a while the plague was stayed.

Soon after our return to our station, however, the robbers paid us another visit ; but they delayed their operations till too near morning, and were disturbed by one of the servants who happened to be stirring early. This time they had entered by the store room ; and we found by the side of a paraffin tin some lighted straw and part of a burnt candle, and just outside an old bayonet with which they had dug out the hole in the wall. They had only taken away a few things of next to no value. But it was very alarming, as we might have been burnt in our beds.

After this we took special care. Boards were fixed up under the windows—the favourite place for breaking through—so as to give a better chance of the noise being

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heard, and arrangements were made for a person to sleep under each window, while I myself prowled about in the darkness for many a night hoping to hear the first sound of their operations. But all was in vain, and my vexation increased accordingly. At last, when we had begun to think that the robbers had given us up, something happened. One night when my wife and I were both sound asleep a frightful yell was heard. Almost at the same moment I felt a sudden prod in the side and a cry: "John, did you hear that?" The next moment I was bounding down the stairs and making for the back door. Whilst I was turning the key in the lock and feeling for the bolt, one of the two women servants ran up and, catching me by the garment, entreated me not to go out, saying, "Oh don't, sir, they will kill you."

But I was too mad to listen. Besides I knew not what tragedy was being enacted out of doors, and it seemed cowardly not to go to the rescue. Throwing her off, I rushed for a stick or a weapon of some kind, and was back again in another moment. Just then there was a second fearful yell. A further effort, and the bolt flew back and I was out, only to see the body of a man clearing the wall, and the cook in a dreadful state of terror near his kitchen door. I was defeated after all! The rascal got clear away, but our own man was saved.

What had happened was this:—The robbers had commenced operations under the sitting-room window, and one of the two women inside, thinking the noise was made by her mistress upstairs attending to the child, said to her companion: "Baby is very restless to-night, isn't he?"

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Now the fellows outside, hearing the talking, suspended their work, but, instead of taking the alarm and going right away, began a similar operation under the kitchen window in the compound. They soon had the soft bricks away, and, entering, opened the window and began removing the contents. The cook, hearing the noise, opened the door of his apartment, and stepped out of the window. One of the men returned for more booty, and then came the first yell. The fellow retreated for a little space ; but seeing the cook was alone and unarmed he made for him with a big knife. Then came the second yell. But at that moment the man must have heard the sound of my drawing back the bolt, and, not knowing what force was behind, he fled.

It was fearfully disappointing. I got in out of the cold as quickly as possible, hurriedly dressed, and went down again to search all around ; but we found nothing except the big cooking pot the thieves had taken outside, and, as before, nothing was ever heard of the guilty parties. It was just as well, perhaps, that we did not get to close quarters. These desperadoes were scarcely ever caught and were altogether reckless. Only a few months before a Roman Catholic priest was badly wounded with a knife in defending the property of the mission from a midnight marauder ; and at a subsequent period one of the ladies of another society got her hand nearly chopped off by a robber, who was lying in wait outside the back door as she was fleeing from the villains inside. Truly my own escape was a matter for thankfulness. But that was the last time we were subjected to such peril.

Notwithstanding these alarms, however, I was kept



RESCUE OF THE COOK.

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fairly busy in the ordinary work of the district, organizing schools, superintending churches, building chapels, helping the sick, and doing what literary work I could. The people were decidedly more backward than were those in and around the capital and some of the other districts. There was a sprinkling of believers amongst them—an encouraging nucleus of Christians comparatively large or small in each congregation; but, as might have been expected, the great mass of the inhabitants were heathen at heart, densely ignorant and wanting nothing to do with the new religion of the foreigner and his friends who had introduced it. They attended church unwillingly, and did their best to withhold their children from instruction. It was only the example of the Queen and the members of the Government, and the practical way in which the local authorities interpreted the encouragement of Christianity they desired, that brought many of the people into the churches. The consequence was the existence of numerous difficulties, and the slow progress of vital religion.

I was able to render valuable aid in the building of churches by the preparation of simple plans, the general oversight of the work, the judicious expenditure of small grants from the Society, and by the encouragement of the people in giving. They laboured under great disadvantages, and had much need of wise assistance. The headmen often made the collection compulsory, stuck to a portion of what they had collected, and employed the rest in a very foolish and wasteful manner. Indeed, when one considers the circumstances under which many of the churches were built, there is room for great surprise that they were as good

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as they were. Left entirely to themselves the inhabitants did not do at all well in the erection of their buildings ; and they never by any possibility finished them, which was generally the case with their own houses. They could not see straight for one thing—no native could, it was a matter of education and experience—and the doors and windows were often awry. But a little help in this and other directions accomplished wonders, and ere we left the district, we were able to look upon various country churches with considerable satisfaction.

Not much could be done for the more distant parts, not only because of the difficulty of superintendence, but largely through the lack of adequate funds to carry on the work. There were only a few evangelists and teachers, and these were visited as opportunity offered.

One of the former was Ramanòhisòa. He was invited shortly after the burning of the idols, when work was plentiful and workers few, to go out as evangelist to Sambàina, where the people were not only wedded to their fetishes and superstition, but were also notorious for robbery and murder. At first he did not wish to go, as he was useful where he was, and did not know how he might be received among such a charm wearing, divination practising, medicine making, ghost fearing company ; but he was at length persuaded to try.

Taken to the place by a local official that the people might know he was a regularly appointed teacher, he and his wife were properly introduced, and then left to their own resources ; but the villagers fastened up their doors and fled. Meantime a tropical storm burst upon them. The newcomers got thoroughly frightened

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with the roll of the thunder, and the flash of the lightning, and were, moreover, drenched with the rain. Tired out at last and shivering with cold, they ventured to open one of the doors, and took the liberty of walking in.

The owners of the dwelling returned in the evening with the other inhabitants, but would neither give nor sell the strangers food. They would not or dared not turn them out into the rain, which still continued ; but they jeered at them, and told them they would soon make them wish they had never come. They did not, however, succeed in the attempt to starve and weary them out. That night the teacher and his brave wife remained without food ; but they managed to get some the next day, and in the course of it made even one or two friends. Then a few children approached them, and these gradually became more in spite of the spreading of the report that they would be taken to Antanànarivo to the missionaries, and then be carried across the sea. Teaching commenced a short time afterwards, and then a service was attempted.

Thus the worthy pair went on refusing to be deterred by any amount of discouragement until they had the satisfaction of seeing a church erected, a fair congregation attending it, and a considerable number of children in the school.

Further south of the great Ankàratra mountains is what is called the " Broken Country," consisting of a large number of extinct volcanoes, which at one time threw out an immense quantity of ashes and scorïæ, overflowed the plains, and partially filled up the valleys with lava. One of these ancient volcanoes—unlike Ivòtovòrona, which is a large sugar-loaf

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mountain in the eastern part of the district and seen for miles around—is not observed till one is comparatively near, because of the many other cones in the neighbourhood. It is nevertheless a good height, whilst in the bosom of its crater, some 500 or 600 feet below, and enclosed within precipitous rocky walls, lies a placid lake, which the natives say is unfathomable. Be that as it may, we were informed that a stone attached to a string, 1,800 feet long did not reach the bottom. The mountain is considered sacred, and there are many curious legends connected with it.

This interesting district is densely populated and is the centre of a large Norwegian mission. At the time of my visit, however, it contained some dozen or more congregations connected with our own mission, which could get very little monetary help or practical superintendence from ourselves, and which were in consequence in a very backward state. Not only so, they were found to be the cause of much unnecessary rivalry, a source of constant worry to the missionaries on the spot, and a hindrance to the real progress of the Kingdom of God. Consequently, after going in and out among them, and hearing what the representatives of the Norwegian mission said, I came to the conclusion that it would be better to advocate withdrawal on our part, although several of these congregations had been formed long before, and we had a perfect right to retain connection. On my reporting to that effect to the committee, the Rev. H. W. Grainge was appointed to accompany me on a second visit to the district; and, on his view coinciding with mine, the withdrawal took place, much to the satisfaction of our friends.

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We could not but be struck with the devotion and the work of these fellow Protestant missionaries, particularly with that of their oldest member, the Rev. Mr. Engh of Bètàfo, and of Mr. Vig of Masindraina and Mr. Rosaas of Antsirabè, where the hot springs are situated. We little thought then that the oldest son of the first named, a bright, intelligent lad, would be killed by the rebels on the coast some sixteen years afterwards, and that about the same time his old father and his colleague, Mr. Vig, would be besieged for days with a company of ladies and children in the last-named place. But so it came to pass ; and perhaps, as the story is most interesting, it will justify me in breaking off for a while from this personal record to give some account of the sad event, based on the published narrative of one of the beleaguered inmates.

It was soon after the French occupation, and the Malagasy here and there made foolish and fruitless attempts at resistance. In this district, as elsewhere, the natives, who had been but little influenced by Christianity and were heathen at heart, were incensed against the foreign missionaries and their converts, because they thought they had been the means of bringing about the conquest ; and attacks had begun to be made on pastors and teachers, and many churches were burned down.

Proceeding further, the rebels in this part of the country attacked and burnt Lôharàno, a station to the east of Antsirabè, and then went on to that place. Now the male members of the Norwegian mission, with the exception of two of the veterans above-mentioned, were away down south at the annual conference, and their wives and children were gathered here, under the

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protection of M. Gerbini—whose young wife was also with him—two French sergeants, and a score of native militia.

As soon as the news of the burning of Lôharàno and the advance of the rebels came, preparations for the defence began to be made. Happily the roof of the mission-house was tiled, so that it could not be fired. The women and children were placed upstairs in the attics. Doors and shutters were closed, loopholes made in various likely places ; and while other preparations for effective resistance were being made, a messenger to Bètàfo was speeding on his way to procure the necessary help.

In the evening the Norwegian brethren conducted a short service of prayer, asking the Divine protection, and craving strength and courage and quiet confidence in the hour of trial. But there was little rest and sleep that night, except for the very small children, wearied out by the excitements of the day, and too young to understand its cause. Their elders, in spite of confidence in God, found it well-nigh impossible "in quietness and confidence to possess their strength," and ever and anon displayed their anxiety by talking of the approach of the rebels and listening for the first sound of their wild and savage shouts. Two hours after midnight, however, they were encouraged by the arrival of another sergeant and sixteen more men from Bètàfo, making the number of Europeans in the house thirty-two and the native soldiers thirty-five. Besides these there were the servants and a few others who had sought protection with them.

It was a fearfully long night, but the morning came at last. Still there was no sign of the enemy. Possibly,

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it was thought, the danger had passed. Hope began once more to prevail, and all hearts were cheered. Suddenly, however, an unearthly yell was heard just outside the compound. Yes, there they were—a wild and disorderly mob, with rough, unkempt hair and ragged scanty garments, brandishing aloft what weapons they had, a hundred or two armed with guns, and the rest carrying great long chopper-like knives, sharp-bladed spears or formidable clubs. It was a blood-curdling spectacle, rendered all the more dreadful by the horrible yells of expectant triumph the murdering wretches set up. The party consisted of about 1,500 men, carrying a red flag; whilst in their rear was a great crowd of people of both sexes and all descriptions urging them on, and prepared to join them in carrying off the spoils when success had attended their efforts.

The hospital and the sanatorium were the first places attacked, and, being undefended, they were soon broken open, looted and destroyed. The flames from the thatched roofs of these buildings rose rapidly heavenwards, whilst myriads of sparks were driven by the wind towards the place where the foreigners and their friends had taken refuge.

Then a rush was made for the house of the doctor near by; but here the assailants did not have it all their own way. In their eagerness to do more damage and secure more booty they did not observe that the door was overlooked by the windows of the house and commanded by the fire of the besieged; and whilst they were endeavouring to burst it open, some of their number were unexpectedly shot down. Surprised, they retired in great confusion; but soon after they

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went round to the back, where they could not be seen, and where they were not long in effecting an entrance, clearing out everything within and firing the roof.

Under cover of the smoke the miscreants commenced the attack on the main building. Happily they could not set light to it, and the watchful inmates were able to give a good account of themselves. The French and native soldiers, firing mainly from the windows, killed and wounded many of their assailants; and Delabre, one of the sergeants, bolder than the rest, with a fine contempt for his undisciplined foes, actually threw himself into their midst and fought them single-handed. His recklessness nearly cost him his life. He was recalled and had to fall back, but not before he had been severely handled.

He was indeed a brave soldier, and every inch a Frenchman. Before obeying the order to retire to the house, and while he was subject to the attacks of the enemy, the gallant fellow slowly and deliberately gathered some flowers from the garden that he might present them to the ladies who, he expected, would come forward to dress his wounds. This done he took up a position in the verandah, and, always making sure of his aim, kept up a steady fire on the enemy. Then, as each shot took effect, and he saw his victim fall, he mockingly called out the native greeting to the nobles, *Tsaràva tompko è*—"I wish you well, sir."

Another opportunity to distinguish himself now offered. The gateway of the compound was by this time broken through, and part of the mob were in the act of demolishing an outbuilding only a yard or two from the house. In this place, with other stores, were six five-gallon tins of paraffin, which it was necessary

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to prevent falling into their hands. Volunteers for the desperate undertaking were called for; and the heroic Delabre, nothing loth, led forward a small company of native militia, and by their aid cleared away the multitude so intent on the spoil, and brought into a place of safety the dangerous stuff which, once in the hands of the enemy, might have been used for the destruction of them all.

The attack went on in a desultory fashion all through the day; now waxing and now waning, now being pressed with vigour and expectancy, and anon relaxed into feeble endeavours and little hope of success, according as the assailants were urged on by the ferocious shouts of the mob behind or discouraged by the well-directed and deadly fire of their would-be victims in front. They were being taught by bitter experience that it was no slight thing to fight with the foreigners, even though they were few in number and apparently at their mercy.

About five o'clock the attack ceased and the besieged were allowed some respite. They had been having a terrible time, especially the women and children who had been driven down from the attics by the shots which broke the tiles and sent the pieces in all directions. The two old missionaries also must have had a fearful experience in the turmoil and excitement of the battle which was not for them. They were forced to think about something else. Apart altogether from the danger to life to which they were all equally exposed, it must have been exceedingly sad and disappointing to them that some of the people, whom they loved and for whom they had toiled so hard and so long and had sacrificed so much, were among the horde of savages

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bent on their destruction ; and when they saw later on in the evening the red glare of the flames of the burning villages around them, where were situated some of their own churches, their hearts must have sunk within them and their faith almost failed. Worst of all, the desperate and unfeeling wretches had actually fired the leper settlement, with its pretty little chapel, and the afflicted inhabitants were probably on the point of being consumed in the flames. Had God utterly forsaken them ? It would almost seem so ; but they could not give way to such thoughts as these. They must trust in God. He would be true to His promise now as He always had been, and no doubt the mystery of His providence would be explained.

During that eventful day the children had been cared for as well as the distressing circumstances of the party would permit ; and when the evening had begun to advance, the little ones, worn out with terror, excitement and weeping, were comforted and put to sleep. The elder ones, however, shared with their parents and friends the anxieties of the night, for slumber fled from their eyes. After getting what food they could, they all prayed, watched and waited, hoping that the morning would bring them quick relief.

There were two other sergeants and a few other soldiers left at Bètàfo. These had been sent for and might possibly come to their aid ; but when morning dawned there was no sign of their appearance. They had indeed received the call and had started with the secretary of the Resident, and on the way had heard the firing and hurried forward more quickly ; but on getting nearer and seeing the village in flames they concluded that the worst had happened, and had turned northwards to

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spread the news that a terrible massacre had taken place.

Meanwhile the unfortunate inmates of the mission-house were still holding out, hoping against hope. The morning of Tuesday passed uneventfully, and they did nothing but watch the marauders carry off the booty—spoils of all kinds, even to the windows, doors, and boards of the houses that had been spared from the fire. As for the church, they seemed more disposed to wreck than to rob. Everything was broken into bits, the benches, the pulpit, the altar, the baptismal font, the harmonium, the doors, and the glass windows. Nothing was spared.

No wonder then that when later the attack on the house was resumed, and carried on with renewed vigour to the accompaniment of most unearthly yells, the beleaguered inmates were more than ever alarmed. Nevertheless, the alarm subsided into quiet submission to the will of God. The attacks, however, were more desperate, and continued without any intermission until the evening. The old sanatorium in the middle of the compound was burned to the ground, and afterwards another building which protected the two flour mills. Everyone expected that the house would then be rushed and the lives of the inmates immediately taken. Had the assailants been a little more bold and determined, this undoubtedly would have been the result. The ammunition had almost given out, and the few cartridges left were distributed amongst the best marksmen. But once more the firing suddenly ceased, and for another night the intended victims were practically left in peace. The time had not yet come. Till it had, they would hold out and trust on.

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The morning of Wednesday, the third day of the siege, again brought no relief, and now the savage horde still surrounding the house adopted different and more dangerous tactics. Taught by a terrible experience, they made no further attempt to take the place by storm. Instead of firing irregular volleys at close quarters, and making repeated rushes in a great crowd of yelling assailants, they approached more or less quietly in small parties carrying wood, dried grass and rushes, and such like, to burn or suffocate in the smoke the obstinate defenders ; and, in order to do this more effectively, they brought up a quantity of chillies to throw upon the fire and produce unbearably strong and acrid fumes. They brought also a little paraffin which they had found and a barrel of gunpowder, and they came armed also with spades to enable them the more effectually to complete their preparations for burning and blowing up the house.

Unhappily, owing to the shortness of ammunition, the brave defenders were quite unable to keep the miscreants at a distance, and so they thought the end must now surely come. But those savage tribesmen, brave and cunning though they were, were not bold enough or skilful enough to successfully attain their purpose. Attempt after attempt to set the place on fire, or produce a volume of pungent smoke sufficient to cause the inmates of the house to come out and be killed forthwith, failed. The attempts were too clumsy and not sufficiently sustained ; and lo ! while they were still trying their best, a cry was raised that help was at hand.

Someone had seen from an upper window a company of people coming towards them far away on a hill to

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the west. Straining his eyes to look more intently he thought he saw them marching in order. He waited for no more, but shouted :

“ It’s true. They’re coming. See them yonder ! ”

Instantly all eyes were turned in the direction indicated. Yes ! it was true ; a column of troops certainly. And there, surely, was the white flag of the Queen of Madagascar waving over them. It was relief at last. There was no longer any doubt ; and the besieged could not contain themselves for joy.

The troops rapidly approached. They were led by the French Resident and the native governor of Bètàfo, who had incidentally heard of the sad state of affairs at Antsirabè after they had started on a journey to another part of the country. Strange to say, the rebels did not appear to realize their approach, or realized it too late. They were completely surprised, and very easily defeated ; and the next day no less than five hundred corpses were found on the field. The men had been killed either during the siege or at the sudden attack at its close.

But to come back to our own experiences. While at Tslafàhy I received a visit of an interesting character. A man from the capital introduced himself in a somewhat mysterious manner, saying that he had something private to communicate. We went into the study, and, after he had sat down and uttered a few introductory remarks, he told me in a long roundabout way that he was a descendant of one of the confessors during the persecution who, after a long series of anxieties and trials, was ultimately delivered from the fear of death, and spared to see the day when all were permitted to worship God according to the dictates of their own

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conscience. "He was desirous," he said, "of showing gratitude for this great mercy, for it was always in his thoughts."

Beginning in this way, I was a bit suspicious of this profession of gratitude, and felt that he had some ulterior object in view. Besides, he did not give the impression of being particularly sincere. So I said—

"Yes, friend; and how do you propose to show this gratitude of which you speak?"

He made some complimentary remark about my well-known sympathy with the slaves, and how, in consequence of my expression of opinion, some of his Christian acquaintances had given freedom to the few they possessed; and then went on to say that he would very much like to copy their example, and so make some return for God's goodness to his ancestor.

"Yes, friend, that will certainly be a very proper way, and very praiseworthy. When do you propose to do it?"

"Ah! that's just it," was the reply. "I am a poor man and can't afford to release my seventeen slaves for nothing; and, knowing your great love for the unfortunate people, I have come to ask you to help."

"Yes; and in what way can I help?"

"By finding some of the money."

"How much, my friend?"

"One hundred dollars each."

Now the average price of a slave was about forty dollars, and this foolish fellow thought he could get credit with the Almighty for releasing his slaves, and at the same time sixty dollars out of me for every one of them.

"What!" I cried in astonishment; but, a thought

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coming into my head, I added, "Just wait a bit; I should like my wife and a couple of friends who are here to hear the story." So going into the next room, I whispered—

"Come and hear the greatest simpleton and the biggest humbug I have ever seen."

Thereupon they filed in and seated themselves around the room.

"Now, friend," said I, cheerily, "go over it again, please. I am sure that our friends would like to hear what you have just been telling me."

Not yet suspecting anything, the stupid man went over the same tale in precisely the same way, whilst his hearers gravely kept silence and preserved a solemn countenance. When, however, he came to the hundred dollars, there was a spontaneous burst of laughter; and it was only then that my visitor seemed to understand. His trustful simplicity gave way at once. His eyes opened more widely, and his light brown face began to assume the greenish hue of fear; and, snatching up his white straw hat, he cried: "Oh! I've made a mistake"; and then he scuttled hastily out of the door, followed by peal on peal of laughter from his whilom audience. We remembered afterwards, however, that Madagascar was not the only place in the world where artless simplicity and arrant humbug are often strangely united in the same person.

To turn now to an event of a totally different kind in which I, with other missionaries, took a part—the opening of the Chapel Royal in Antanànarivo, on May 8, 1880, and succeeding days. It was a beautiful building, which had been in course of erection for some years under the superintendence of Mr. W. Pool,

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who was sent out by the Society to complete the Martyr Memorial Churches and render what help he could in other directions. The walls of this pretty church were of whitish grey stone from the neighbouring quarries; and the pews within for the members of the court, and the raised seat for Her Majesty, were of the best mahogany or rosewood from the forest. The organ, of course, and the stained glass windows, as also the brass and other fittings, were from England.

The opening was a memorable event in the history of Malagasy Christianity. One might safely say there never was such a chapel opening in any other country in the world. Her Majesty made it not only a royal, but a national affair. Thinking that the ceremonies would be of quite as much importance and interest to her people as to herself, she called them up from all parts of the central provinces to join with her in dedicating the house to the worship and service of Almighty God.

For fifteen successive days, the various congregations connected with the mother churches in the capital streamed into the city and took their turn in packing the place several times a day. Altogether there were sixty-one services, and the Queen and Prime Minister and the members of the Court sat through them all. Her Majesty was desirous that as many of the people as possible should have an opportunity of seeing the beautiful chapel, and of joining with her in worship within its walls; and she certainly did her best to gratify their natural curiosity, and to encourage their loyal and religious inclinations. So eager were the natives to avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded them, and so excellent were the arrange-

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ments for their admission, that some thirty thousand found themselves within the walls in the course of the fifteen days.

There was no ornate and elaborate service, and no bishop in full canonicals to perform the act of consecration. In fact there was an entire absence of pomp and show on the part of those who took part in the proceedings. The native ministers were in their ordinary attire, and I am not sure whether there was such a thing as a white tie on the person of any missionary who assisted them. It was not so much for the spectacle afforded by the services as for the services themselves, that the people assembled, and they were content that these should be conducted in the ordinary way. The only part other than usual was an explanatory speech on the first day on behalf of the Queen, in which she reiterated her hearty acceptance of Christianity and her determination to reign according to its principles. She confirmed, moreover, the declaration already printed and enclosed within the foundation stone, that any succeeding Sovereign who abandoned the religion of Christ and destroyed the building erected to perpetuate it should thereby forfeit his right to the throne; little dreaming that she would have only one successor, and that after her the sanctuary thus solemnly dedicated would be turned to secular uses.

Missionaries officiated now and then in the Chapel Royal when specially requested to do so; but the conduct of public worship and the management of the affairs of the Palace Church were always in the hands of the native pastors and deacons. The musical part was usually a great feature, the best singers being

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sometimes drafted off from other congregations to assist the palace choir.

Foreigners were occasionally invited to join with the Queen in worship, and after the service Her Majesty was sometimes gracious enough to permit them to take her hand. The Queen, however, must have often found it a trifle irksome ; and those individuals who were thus honoured were enjoined, before being taken round to the vestry and introduced to the Presence, not to shake the royal hand too heartily. It did not do to grasp it like that of a friend you had not seen for years, and

“ Give a real good hearty shake
For the days of long ago.”

The proper way was to take it as gingerly as you could, and release it as quickly and as gently as you might ; and then stand silently and respectfully aside for the royal party to pass on.

CHAPTER VII

TO THE CAPITAL AND HOME

JUST after this event we removed to the capital, and took up our residence in the mission-house adjoining the church at Ambòhipòtsy; the committee thinking that, as we were due home on furlough in the following year and the mother church was temporarily vacant, it would be better for us to live there whilst in charge of the two districts.

I was soon immersed in all the details of both town and country work, some of which—especially those in connection with cases of discipline—were very difficult and perplexing. Then again my broad liberal views with regard to the management of needy country churches soon got me into trouble. But in this case I was only assisting to carry out an arrangement made by my predecessor, which I saw no reason to upset. It appears that he had agreed to the Friends taking the oversight of a number of congregations on the borders of their district, because they could spend more money and give them more attention than he could.

But this did not meet the approval of the pastor of the Mother Church, who went out repeatedly to the district concerned and organized a vigorous opposition. Not only so, but one Sabbath morning, when I was out preaching elsewhere, this man made a violent attack on me in the town church, and, of course, excited a

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good deal of angry feeling. On coming home I found my wife in tears and greatly perturbed, as she feared the Rakòtovào trouble all over again. But on thinking it out, I came to the conclusion that it would be best not to reply in the afternoon when I had to take the service, but quietly to ignore the attack, especially as the pastor and his friends were prepared to make a disturbance. Accordingly, when the time came, I said nothing about it, and simply preached a sermon on the "water of life." This softened the hearts of the people, and made them feel that their missionary friend was being abused for nothing. The dispute in the country was not settled for months; but I left them to it, and had no further personal trouble.

Another thing that pleased the people was the initiation and carrying out of a movement for the repair of the road from the church to the top of the hill leading into the heart of the city. It was in a terrible condition, especially where it was no other than the bottom of a narrow gully between two dangerous crumbling banks. Scarcely any attention was paid to it, as the Queen never came that way; and the people had to climb up and down large loose boulders as best they could. I started a collection, anxious that, apart from superintendence, it should be an entirely Malagasy affair, and, by dint of a little perseverance and patience, secured a sum of over one hundred dollars, of which the Prime Minister gave five.

When the road was levelled and the big and little blocks of stone put in position as well as amateurs with no proper appliances could do it, we planted some Cape lilacs along the southern portion, which afterwards formed a wide avenue, and afforded quite a welcome

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shade from the heat of the sun. It was certainly a considerable improvement, and was known to many as Houlder's road for long afterwards.

At this time, and for months afterwards, there was little regular mission work to be done, because of the many political and social events that happened one after another to interfere with the daily life of the people. With the former we were in no way concerned, and when we could not do one thing we devoted our attention to another. But it was different with such things as marriages and funerals, and other functions we were expected to attend.

In the Prime Minister's large family there was always something or other happening. Quite recently he had lost a son and a sister; and now a daughter had to be laid to rest in the family tomb at Isotry, and solemn services had to be conducted by some of ourselves and the native pastors. These were attended by thousands of people amidst great pomp and ceremony.

Then there came a couple of marriages within a few months of each other. The first, that of Rapènoèlina, a favourite son who had been sent to England to be educated, and the other, that of Ramàriavèlo, one of his brothers. Both these marriages were celebrated at the Chapel Royal, and were followed by a great feast and much rejoicing. The Prime Minister and his friends were beaming with happiness, but some of us were not particularly gay. We knew too much of the character of the young men—they were both my former scholars—and we feared that the marriages would turn out badly. This they certainly did, and the lot of the girl-brides soon became extremely wretched.

The entertainment at the royal gardens at Ambòditsìry,

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a few days after the second wedding, was the more splendid of the two. They were situated a mile or two out of town, and were occasionally used for festive purposes such as this, when their beauty was enhanced by artificial adornments prepared for the occasion. Special arrangements had been made for the comfort and convenience of the guests. There was a large tent erected in the grassy square, around the sides of which were pretty little pavilions. Within it were sofas, chairs and a table, beautifully decorated with flowers and a magnificent bridal cake in a silver basket. The tent, moreover, was ornamented with light curtains, and the royal banner waved from the top. On the ground outside were large pieces of rich carpet forming a square right round, and outside this again was a broad edging of strong white cotton cloth.

On each of the two sides there were a couple of roasted oxen, fixed on strong supports, all four being decorated with mottoes done in confectionery. There were also tables under the double row of mango trees, richly laden with a profusion of meats—beef, mutton and poultry—and piles on piles of cakes. For drinks there were mostly lemonade and water for the temperance people, and a sprinkling here and there of a few bottles of wine for the wine bibbers.

Everybody—well, almost everybody—who was anybody was there, and they all waited with eagerness for the Queen and Court who arrived about half-past three. There was of course tremendous enthusiasm; and the signal being given, the hundreds of people present fell to on viands so profusely set before them, whilst the members of the Prime Minister's family and friends stood behind the guests with fancy brushes made of



A PRINCESS'S GARDEN PARTY NEAR THE CAPITAL.

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rofia palm to flick and wave away the ever insistent flies. At the same time, the Queen and her consort went the round of the tables, to encourage the company to eat and drink the good things provided for them.

The feast over, we sat in a square to see the revels ; but, as the day was then far advanced, we could not stay to witness a tithe of what was to come. So after Her Majesty had given the children sweets, and the Prime Minister had shown us round the grounds, we bade them adieu, and took our departure for home, arriving just after sunset. The next day we heard that hundreds more had partaken of the royal hospitality, and that the festivities lasted practically all night.

Shortly after the gala day at Ambòditsiry an attempt was made to break into our house by the robbers who had just begun to be busy again, but they were signally unsuccessful. They tried my study window, but the man sleeping under it awoke and heard them. After waiting some time to allow them to finish the hole and one of them to poke his head inside, and give him an opportunity of hitting it, he went to arouse his fellow servants, lest the rascals should try some other place. This they did, but the fastenings were too strong. The only thing they succeeded in doing was to bend one of the bolts. We had taken the precaution to have a watchman ; but, as so often had been the case, he continued to sleep on his mat outside, and let the robbers do as they pleased. Finding themselves baulked, the men went away in disgust.

As the year advanced, we began to make preparations for our first furlough home. There was much to be done towards providing for the land journey and the sea voyage. Things came out from England for

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ourselves and the children, and others were made on the spot. We should be forming quite a cavalcade with the six children we were taking with us, and Mr. Lord's eldest son, Harry, of whom we had promised to take charge. I busied myself with the stretchers and the frames of the hoods for the palanquins, and pots and pans, etc., whilst Mrs. Houlder looked after the covers and the necessary food we were to carry.

Needless to say, we both dreaded the undertaking. It would be no joke taking such a company of little folks down country and looking after them at sea, particularly as the youngest—the baby—was ill ; and our first thought was for a nurse who should go with us all the way. Now, our dependents were usually slaves who entered our service by the permission of their owners, who more frequently than not exacted a portion of their wages. But, as no master would be likely to allow his bondswoman to be taken out of the country, we had provided the greater part of the money for securing the freedom of a woman who had been with us for years, and in whom we had confidence ; but when the time for our departure was close at hand, she shrank from the prospect and suddenly left us with little thought of gratitude in her heart. Fortunately, as it seemed, we were able to make arrangements with another woman and her owner, and the way appeared clear. Then, when all the preparations were completed and we had said good-bye to foreign and native friends, we made the start. I forget exactly the date, for I have no record of the journey ; but it must have been some time in May.

All went well until the morning of the morrow, when a man appeared and said he was the owner of the

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woman who had consented to act as nurse, and that he had not agreed to let her go. Whether or no it was so, we did not know ; but he was told that money had been paid to some one else who made an equal claim, and that authority had been obtained from the Government to take her out of the country. The arrangement could not be altered then, even if he was the rightful owner. However, he was obdurate, and, laying hold of the palanquin, he stopped the bearers.

Now here was a difficulty ! But it was clearly impossible to let the nurse go, as help of some kind was absolutely necessary, not only for our convenience and comfort, but because my wife's life was probably at stake. She would certainly break down under the strain, and might possibly sink under it, as she was still far from well. When, therefore, the fellow continued obstinate and would not let go, Mr. Lord and I took him forcibly away whilst the others went far ahead. Then, seeing we were determined, he went sulkily back.

On the morning of the second day, just before starting, we were overtaken by a Queen's messenger with a parting present of a silk lamba, which was quite in accordance with custom. So I had to stop and write a letter of thanks. But I must not dwell upon the details of this journey, even if I could remember them. We had the usual long and weary days and sleepless, comfortless nights, rendered all the more so by the necessity of caring for the children. It used to take us from two to three hours in the wretchedly cramped houses, after arriving at night, sometimes nearly or quite wet through, getting them their meals, setting up their stretchers, and putting them to bed ; and about the same time in the morning getting them

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washed and dressed, and seeing that they had a proper meal. As a rule they were very good and gave no more trouble than they could help ; but now and again their very weariness, and the misery and discomfort of their surroundings, made them restless, if not downright naughty. On one of these occasions one child was disturbing the rest by a seemingly more than usually fretful cry, and I rose from my stretcher to administer a practical admonition ; but in the dim light of the candle on the other side of the room the wrong boy received it, when of course we had a duet instead of a solo. Never mind ! the music of both soon ceased, and the innocent sufferer has long since forgiven me.

We were glad enough when we were out of the forest, through the low country and down the river to Andòvorànto, and so were the children. How delighted they were to see the sea ! And didn't they revel in the sand of the sea shore !—digging here, poking there, making forts and channels, hunting for shells, and pursuing with shrieks of laughter the tiny crabs that had a funny way of running backwards. But we could not linger, and we knew they could get plenty of that at Tamatàve, so we hastened on and were thankful to reach that place in another two days, having been altogether twelve on the journey.

As at our entrance into the port, so now we had to be content with a large empty house with no furniture therein. There were still no hotels in the place, at least none that could accommodate such a large company as ours. But we were better provided for a short stay than on the first occasion. We had our travelling apparatus with us, and our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Coles, of the S.P.G., lent us a few other things. Nevertheless,

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we had not anything like all that was necessary for comparative comfort, and the time of our sojourn was long.

In those days it was far easier to get into Madagascar than out of it. There were no lines of steamships running, and very few vessels of other kinds. The most frequent means of communication to either Mauritius or Réunion was by bullocker, such as we had come by ten years before ; and that, as we knew, was not a very enviable prospect. For several weeks there was not even that, and in the meantime we waited with what patience we could.

There was one thing that caused us great anxiety—the probability of having to go without a nurse after all. On the way down our woman had met her husband, or a man who called himself such ; and his expostulations, added to the violent effort of the fellow who claimed to be her owner just after we had started, had had the desired effect, and she now declined to cross the water. Then at last, before we could get anyone to take the woman's place, there came a vessel into port, which, after taking on board a full cargo of bullocks, was to sail for the island of Réunion. It was a miserable chance ; but it was thought that if we took it we might catch the French mail steamer there and so get on to Mauritius, and thence home by an English boat, *via* the Cape of Good Hope. An agreement was accordingly entered into and preparations made for embarkation.

The voyage was expected to last a fortnight because of contrary winds from the east ; so we sent on board a box of cakes and several baskets of oranges for the children, and one or two small bottles of cheap champagne for ourselves, as some help in sea sickness. We also provided ourselves with a couple of liver pads at

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4s. each, as they were said by the American captain who sold them to be a sure and infallible preventive, and were also strongly recommended by a friend, who had just crossed over from Mauritius.

The next day we embarked and commenced what turned out to be the worst experience at sea that we ever had. The ship was a very small one, and she had in her open hold no less than 200 head of cattle, the stench from which was truly horrible. The main saloon was about sixteen feet by fourteen feet, with a narrow table down the middle and seats on each side, and opposite them were several cabins occupied by the captain and his mate and two or three other passengers. Opening out of this was a smaller place at the stern with a cabin on each side containing a couple of berths, four in all. This was the accommodation for our two selves and seven children ! From this again a companion ladder led up to a small poop, enclosed by a low rail, very easy to fall over ; but this had been temporarily raised by the addition of a strip of canvas.

As to the food supplied, it was the ordinary greasy stuff well flavoured with garlic, to which the Creole sailors were accustomed. It was served up twice a day. No provision whatever had been made for an extra supply for passengers who might have been expected to have a different taste. Add to this a more than ordinary dose of sea sickness on account of the nature of the food and the abominable smells that were always present, and one can get some idea of our miserable condition.

But the champagne, the oranges and the liver pads ! Yes, the two former came on board right enough, and we carried the latter on the proper place on our bodies ; but we got no benefit from either the wine or the fruit,

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or the "invariably infallible remedy." The rascally sailors drank the champagne and sucked the oranges, and as to the new-fangled remedy for sea-sickness, we found the pads to be no good whatever and an intolerable nuisance besides ; so we pitched them overboard and relieved ourselves of their irksome presence. The pad was as thick as a tea-cake, and almost as large. Fancy wearing a thing like that inside one's clothing morning, noon and night ! How foolish we were to try it ; but what won't the dread of *mal de mer* accomplish ?

The children suffered dreadfully in their cramped-up bunks, though one or two of them kept me company on the cabin floor. They soon got accustomed, however, to their altered circumstances and did fairly well ; and now and again their experiences were more laughable than otherwise. They had to take their food out of a large washhand basin set on the floor, and every now and then, when the ship gave an extra lurch, they would miss the spoonful they were about to take, and roll over one another instead. This and other queer happenings incident to their novel position made it more interesting, though sometimes in a dreadful way. Amongst these happenings were the frequent deaths of bullocks, which could not be kept from the little folks. The poor creatures, badly fed, and huddled together in the hold, suffered much from the rolling and pitching and tossing of the ship, and numbers of them succumbed to the hardships they were enduring. Every now and again we could hear the splash of their carcasses, as they were thrown into the sea to the sharks which followed in our wake. For us the life was a daily purgatory ; and we were always fearing lest one of the children should go upstairs unattended and fall overboard.

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Then, as I had anticipated, my poor wife suffered much. The closeness of the cabin, the dreadful smells, the uneatable food, the want of proper rest, the constant care of the children, and the ever present anxiety concerning them—all this was too much for her. She was quite exhausted and altogether overcome several times, and I had hard work to restore her to consciousness. How hard I tried to make things more tolerable for us and to vary the food ; but to little purpose. My expostulations to the captain and visits to the galley were almost in vain. The sturdy fellow saw no harm in the food, which he enjoyed himself as much as ever ; and the cook either could not, or would not, understand what was wanted, even to the preparation of a poached egg. The mate, however, was a genial obliging soul and proved to be a friend in need. He would come along occasionally with a few biscuits, or some nice bread and cheese ; and one day his face beamed again because he had found a couple of bottles of stout which he “ was sure the English lady would like.” With this kind help and these little variations of the ship’s daily *menu* she kept up better than I had hoped, and one fine morning the mountains of Réunion were in sight, and soon we were sailing along the shore and could see the green fields in the lowlands. In a few hours we found ourselves anchored at St. Denis, and truly thankful we were to have come safely thus far on our way, notwithstanding the miseries and dangers of the past fortnight.

We landed as speedily as possible, and then what a washing and scrubbing there was in the fine large baths of the hotel ; what a putting on of nice clean clothes, and how much we enjoyed the meal that followed. Then,

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of course, we had a capital night's sleep, and were thus the better prepared for the fatigues and vexations of the following day.

News had come early that the expected mail had arrived. So after breakfast I secured a passage for the party, and we picked up our belongings and hastened down to the jetty to get a boat to take us first of all to the *Isaure* for our luggage, and then on to the steamer. But a difficulty cropped up. No boatman would undertake the business except at an exorbitant rate; and then apparently they made up their minds not to take us at all. We waited there hour after hour, and called in the good offices of the British Consul, but seemingly all to no purpose. They left us still standing about on the jetty.

At last two men were found willing to take us at a greatly increased rate, and we set off. The goods from the bullocker were fetched as soon as possible, and then we went off to the steamer which was close at hand. We got on board all right, and the men were just hauling up the baggage, when the captain gave the order to start; and as the ship began to move, the boxes in the slings went banging down again into the boat. Everything was there, bags and boxes of every description, even the umbrellas and the odds and ends we were carrying about with us. All that we had, and that we regarded as a providence, was a handbag in which was carried the baby's food. A pressing appeal to the officers and the captain was entirely in vain. They would not listen for a moment, and there we were with a short residence in Mauritius, and a long voyage home in prospect without a single change of clothing; and this after months of careful and anxious preparation.

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To add to our troubles we could not find berths, although we had taken first class tickets ; and we had to attempt sleep on the saloon floor. Some of the passengers actually abused us, I remember, for venturing to travel in that part of the world without a proper knowledge of French. Most, however, were sympathetic. But sorrow endured only for a night. We secured what food we could—for they had finished dinner—and then we laid ourselves down to rest around the tables on the mattresses the stewards had provided. The children, being thoroughly wearied out with all the excitements and fatigues of the day, slept soundly for hours ; and as for ourselves, we dozed off for a little, and in the morning had the satisfaction of knowing that the island for which we were making was in sight. We soon reached the port, and delayed not to disembark.

During the fortnight we spent in Mauritius, we hoped that some vessel would arrive from Réunion with our luggage ; and day after day I looked out for the signal. But no such luck ! It was more than four months before the things arrived in England after our own arrival, and then only the large packages—the rest having been appropriated by the boatmen. We delayed as long as possible the purchase of fresh things ; but at length we were obliged to refit as sparingly as possible, because of the increased cost of clothing in the colony.

Our troubles with French and Creole officers, however, were now over. The Donald Currie steamer *Lapland* had arrived, and being again ready for sea we booked our passages and went on board. After our rough experiences on the bullocker and the mail, we much enjoyed the voyage both on this ship and on the *Conway*

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Castle which we joined at Durban. We were glad also of the opportunity of seeing something of the South African coast towns, especially Cape Town, where we were enabled to finish the refitting before setting out once more for home. We reached home in due course all the better for the capital accommodation, good food, cheery company, and healthful sea breezes that we had enjoyed on board the English vessels, and with hearts full of gratitude for having been preserved through all the discomforts and perils of the way.

CHAPTER VIII

GETTING INTO MADAGASCAR IN A TIME OF WAR

AFTER a pleasant furlough the time came to return. It was found very difficult, as in other cases, to part with the children ; but we had the assurance that they would be receiving a good education at the mission schools at Blackheath and Sevenoaks, and be otherwise well cared for. So on May 23, 1883, we went on board the *Grantully Castle* with comparatively light hearts, looking forward to a happier spell of foreign labour.

On leaving Dartmouth, however, two days afterwards, startling news in the morning papers filled us with gloomy forebodings of coming trouble. The French had bombarded some towns on the north-east coast of Madagascar. That we knew meant war. There had been strained relations between the two countries for years, owing to the persistent claims of the French and the unwise and dilatory policy of the Malagasy ; and there was no doubt whatever that, if it came to the exercise of force, the latter would make what resistance they could. This act of aggression was bound to be resented, and we felt sure that at the least we should find on arrival a very unsettled state of affairs. There is little doubt that if the tidings had come before our embarkation, orders for it would have been countermanded, that we might await the course of events.

Getting into Madagascar in War Time

As it was, there was nothing for it but to go on and hope for the best.

Cape Town was reached on the evening of June 13, and we went ashore the next day, just in time to attend the Congregational Union meetings. Much to our surprise, there was no more news of Madagascar affairs, and none came during the two or three days we tarried.

We changed into the *Dunkeld*, and went up the coast to Durban, paying visits to Port Elizabeth and East London on the way. There we transhipped again into the *Taymouth Castle*, Captain Hay, and left again for the island without getting any further intelligence. A few more days, and we were steaming up the coast. What had happened we knew not, and we wondered what would be our experience at Tamatave. We had not long to wait. I was the first person to go on deck on the morning of the 26th, when, lo ! the port was in sight ; and, on looking through the glass, I saw the tricolour floating proudly over the fort, and the roadstead crowded with ships. The others soon came up and saw for themselves. Alas ! our fears were realized, and our hopes were shattered.

We anchored about nine o'clock, and were immediately approached by a boat from a French man-of-war, when two sentries were placed in charge of the vessel with orders to prevent any communication with the shore without express permission. Then the ship's agents were allowed to come off, and we learned something of what had happened.

About a fortnight before, the place had been bombarded, and the next day it was occupied by the troops—the Malagasy soldiers having retreated to their forti-

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fications a few miles inland. The worst piece of news that concerned us was a notification of the fact that our brother, Mr. G. A. Shaw, who was the missionary in charge of the L.M.S. station, was a prisoner at that moment on board one of the French ships, charged forsooth with being a spy on behalf of the natives. We heard later on the morrow that he was further charged with trying to poison the French troops.

It appears that he with other British-born subjects of the Queen had not taken refuge on board ship, like most of the Creole residents, but had stayed to take what care he could of his own property and that of the mission. During the interregnum between the bombardment and the effective occupation, he had gone up to the house to rescue what things he could. He found that the place had been raided by the natives during the night, and that the contents of his dispensary, as well as other things, were all scattered about the grounds. He gathered up what he could, and went down to his lodgings in the town. Then came the French soldiery, some of whom being very thirsty—as was not to be surprised at in that hot land—and thinking that they had discovered wine in some of the bottles, drank thereof, and were accordingly somewhat uncomfortably affected thereby—how far was not said.

Now it was only natural that poor Mrs. Shaw, who had come out with us to join her husband, should want to see him ; but, although an urgent appeal was forwarded to the French admiral on her behalf, he dismissed it on the ground that “ the interests of justice would not permit of his granting her request.” Then the distracted lady asked that she might be allowed to share the imprisonment, or at least to land, so that,

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being in the town, she might be near him ; but neither request was granted, and even the letters which she wrote to him were not delivered until the ship had gone away.

Mr. Shaw was then confined in a small cell on the lowest deck of an old ship, from which he was only allowed to go out once a day for an hour's exercise. The food given him was the usual coarse food of the sailors, served up in a wooden pannikin. Here he had to remain two full months, and was only released in consequence of the manifest indignation of the British public and the strong and energetic representations of our ambassador in Paris. As compensation for his sufferings and the indignity put upon him, the French Government ultimately offered an apology and paid the sum of £1,000.

The relations between the French and English commanders at Tamatave were at one time very critical. Admiral Pierre had been acting, and was still acting, in a very arbitrary manner, and Captain Johnstone, of H.M.S. *Dryad*, was very conciliatory and cautious. He was, however, determined to uphold the honour of the British flag, and to resist any open act of hostility, though he would only have another small vessel to help him. Grave events, especially those in connection with H.M. consul, had been occurring on shore, which had nearly provoked a breach ; and now the *Taymouth Castle* was forbidden to take any mail from the port, whether civil communications or naval despatches. Whereupon Captain Johnstone insisted on his own right and that of the British community to put letters on board, and instructed our captain to bring his ship as near his own as possible ; and then he sent a lieutenant to assist him in taking her out of the northern passage,

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saying that, if necessary, the *Dryad* should be his escort, Needless to add that as the *Taymouth* passed we ranged ourselves along the bulwarks and gave the captain and his gallant sailors three rousing cheers. Discipline, however, made them on their part altogether silent. Thus on the 28th we left Tamatave, while a big fire raged in the native quarter of the town.

After two miserable days with strong head winds against us, and the vessel pitching and tossing badly, and, what was perhaps worse, with our hearts sore and our heads full of doleful thoughts, we anchored in the beautiful harbour of Port Louis once again.

The news we brought soon spread and created quite a sensation in the island. There was much sympathy manifested for Mrs. Shaw, and strong indignation among the greatest part of the community because of the arbitrary action of the French. As was natural this was more particularly felt by the British-born residents and officials, and by the officers and soldiers of the garrison. Soon after our arrival one of the latter—an irascible Irishman—allowed his intense patriotism to get him into sad trouble. Coming down the Chaussée—one of the principal streets of Port Louis—on his way to the barracks, Paddy saw in the large plate glass window of a French sympathizer a highly-coloured flaring painting of the bombardment of Tamatave, with the guns of the Hova fort and the tricolour-bedecked ships blazing away at each other. Being partly in drink, this flaunting exhibition excited him beyond control ; so he retreated to the other side of the road, and with a “ one, two, three, bedad, here goes,” he rushed across again and bashed in the window, painting and all. Of course there was a great outcry ;

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and the man was arrested and delivered over to the military authorities, who thereupon dealt with the case and administered punishment ; although it was currently reported that the culprit got off more lightly than he would have done, owing to the unnecessary fuss made by the one party and the strong feeling that prevailed among the other.

Friends in Mauritius were unboundedly kind to us, and in due course we were lodged in different places to await the issue of events and the expected fresh instructions from home. Mrs. Shaw became for a time the guest of the Anglican bishop ; and the governor, Sir John Pope Hennessey, particularly interested himself in the case. He had us all to lunch at his country residence, and asked us all sorts of questions concerning Madagascar, its sovereign, its government, its people, and the prospect of their successfully or otherwise resisting the action of the French—getting from us, of course, more reliable information than he could from any other people.

But the excitement soon died down, and we became as ordinary sojourners in a strange land, waiting for an opportunity to get out of it as soon as possible. The time was long ; but we employed it to the best of our ability, taking an occasional service, visiting friends, picking up what health we could, and generally preparing for an acceptable change.

At last, after nearly four months had expired, it came ; and in an unexpected manner. We had all met together and gone for an excursion to a sea port on the other side of the island. We were returning after a very pleasant day, when at one of the stations *en route* a telegram was put into our hands. It contained the

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long-expected instructions. Mr. Thorne had already started, by request, for Madagascar. The rest were to scatter in various directions, my wife and I being ordered to the Cape, where, as it afterwards turned out, a temporary appointment awaited me.

This created a perplexing and serious question for the Sibrees and ourselves, especially as the former were strongly desirous of getting back to the island. On a thorough and prayerful consideration of the question, we came to the conclusion that if the Directors had known, as we did, all the facts of the case, they would have authorized us to try and get back to our work. Accordingly, we resolved to do so on our own responsibility. But although, as it happened, things turned out well and we were able to resume our duties; yet it might have been very different, and we should have had a poor defence for directly disobeying orders.

There was one thing, however, which I felt no hesitation in doing, and that was to send Mrs. Houlder and the two boys back to England. Not knowing what might befall in a land where war was raging, our friends at home were evidently averse to incurring the responsibility of sending them there, and realizing the weight of their objection, quite apart from my own anxiety, I could do no other than comply with their wishes.

A passage was secured in a few days in a small vessel called the *Countess*, and we embarked on October 24. Mrs. Houlder came to see me off, leaving the little lads in the kind care of friends. It was a sad parting, as the uncertainties and possibilities of the future were so serious.

But it was no time for indulging in sentiment of any kind. I well knew all that was in my dear wife's mind,

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and how her heart was well-nigh breaking. There was only a loving kiss, and a warm embrace ; and the next moment she was over the side and away, stepping out firmly along the quay, and casting not a look behind. And it was just so with her all through life. There was little manifestation of sentiment, but plenty of practical help in every time of trouble.

An hour or two afterwards we were towed out of harbour, and were off on our adventurous voyage in the hope of being able to run the blockade of the opposite coast. But we had first of all to touch at St. Denis. What we did there I do not remember. I could not have wanted to venture ashore, however, as there was no certainty of getting back again. We could only have remained but a short time, and then it was up anchor and away again.

As we drew near to Madagascar our anxiety about being permitted to land increased ; and when we saw a sail in the distance we feared the worst. The captain said he thought it must be one of the French war vessels, the commander of which would certainly send to over-haul us and demand to know our destination and business. Had this been really the case we should have had to give plain answers to plain questions, and should probably have been prevented from setting foot on the island. Happily, however, there was no need for any further anxiety. To our surprise and delight, the ship, which was gradually approaching nearer and nearer, suddenly changed her course, drew off, and finally disappeared below the horizon. This enabled us to continue our voyage more hopefully, and the next day we made the coast and brought up at Mahanoro, a port a little more than a hundred miles south of Tamatave.

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We were glad to see that there was not another vessel in the offing, and, consequently, we were able to land with all our baggage in perfect safety. To add to our satisfaction, quite a large party of friends from Antanànarivo was there awaiting a ship to take them away. These gave us the latest information as to the state of affairs in the interior, and assured us there was no danger to be apprehended in taking up our residence once again in the capital, or on the journey thither.

The next day, H.M.S. *Dryad* came in and communicated with the shore, when we learned that the vessel of which we were so much afraid was no other than this very ship; so that there was really no need for any anxiety on her account. With his usual kindness Captain Johnstone provided accommodation for all the people awaiting a passage, and took them over to Mauritius.

We did not stay long at Mahanòro, for, fortunately, there were plenty of men willing to be engaged; and we busied ourselves for a day or two with the unpacking of goods. How disappointed I was in one barrel of crockery that we had packed so carefully ourselves, when the home at Dewsbury was broken up. Not a thing was whole. Every article had been smashed by the shipping and reshipping and the knocking about the barrel had had during the voyages we had made. Skill, we found, as well as care was necessary in packing. However, that was about the only serious damage done; and, committing the major part of the goods to the agent to be forwarded, we took our departure. We were very fortunate in doing so, as a French ship came in immediately afterwards and bombarded the town, the very first shot striking the native church.

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It was a very interesting and enjoyable journey up, and less arduous than that to the northward, to which we had been accustomed, notwithstanding the fact that the paths were less frequently trodden. Going up the coast for about half a day, part of which was along a spacious lagoon with its waters covered with white lilies, and its green banks adorned with a profusion of beautiful flowers, we struck inland and soon got amongst the hills and dales adorned with a multitude of palms and canes and creepers of all sorts. Further on we travelled along the banks of the Màmampòntsy, and then began the ascent of the forest-clad mountains, from the heights and depths of which came the shrill cries of lemurs and babacoots, whilst numbers of gaily-coloured birds flew hither and thither across and around our path.

On the fifth day we struck the river Mangòro, and crossing in one of the big canoes travelled northward along its banks for many hours by the side of magnificent roaring cataracts. The scene here was superb. The vegetation in the valley was most profuse and luxurious, while on each side of the rushing river the giant mountains rose, sometimes to a height of fully three thousand feet.

Leaving the river we went westward again, and, after a series of climbings up and goings down, arrived at Ambòdinivòngo, preparatory to the final climb over the mountains of the inner belt of forest. The rains were now near at hand ; and, as the thunder began to roll and the lightning to flash, I made haste to set up my patent travelling stretcher, and put up the covering under the very holey roof of the only house that seemed likely to afford some shelter. But the man who was accustomed

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to it was not there to assist, with the result that I was too long over the process, and the rain came through in torrents ; another proof of the fact that in travelling in wild lands like these the simplest things are the best.

The next morning we started early, and after traversing the last bit of forest reached the holiday rest house at Andràngalòaka, where I got the heartache thinking of those who had on several occasions spent there with me so many happy days. However, it did not do to meditate in that way, and by the time that we arrived at Ambàtomangà, which we usually made the stopping place, I had become fairly cheerful again.

It was here that we saw the first sign of the warlike spirit that prevailed in the interior, and the apparent determination of the people to resist foreign aggression to the last. The boys in the school were being drilled daily and they were all armed with miniature spears and shields, or long sticks to represent rifles. This did not apply, however, to the slave population. The slaves professed, of course, much patriotism and willingness to defend the country ; but, as the men who carried me had been saying on the way up, " it was not their business to fight, whatever assurances to that effect they gave ; what they had to do was to render service to those who were the strongest."

After a good night's rest in the large house with the long gable poles in this place, we set off early on the morning of the eighth day, and were not long before we met with one or two of our friends from the capital, and later on a whole crowd of others. They were curious to see us and give us a welcome, but were more anxious, we presumed, to hear reliable news from the



THROUGH THE SWIFTLY-FLOWING RIVER.

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outside world. They had heard very little since the outbreak of hostilities, and some had had no letters for fully six months.

Soon after our arrival, the coronation of the new Queen took place. The ceremony was performed on the elevated sacred stone in the midst of the great plain of Imàhamàsina, and afterwards Her Majesty made a speech to the people.

Then followed various other speeches from the notables, giving plentiful assurances of fidelity and expressing their firm determination to lay down their lives for her sake and that of the country. The usual patriotic and emphatic declaration was repeatedly made that "not a thumb's breadth of the land"—varied occasionally by the words "not a hair's breadth," or "not so much as a flea can stand upon"—"shall be given up to the foreigner."

We could not help thinking at the time that there was little real meaning in all this confident talk, and that the first touch of real war would make the boasters sing a different tune. But that could not be said then; and in the meanwhile hostilities were to drag on, followed by a patched-up peace lasting for a few more years, and then the end would come.

A few days after this great event some of us had the opportunity of attending the Palace Church, and after the service, conducted by one of our number, we were introduced to the new Queen in the vestry, as she passed through to her residence. The Prime Minister was as cordial as ever, smiling all over his face and chatting pleasantly to first one and then another, but his royal mistress preserved an impassive countenance, and, like a veritable sphinx, not a muscle moved. She was,

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however, comparatively new to the situation, and, though she was kind enough, was probably feeling a little shy and awkward.

The natives were greatly excited of course over the French aggression, and strong language was not confined to loyal and over-confident harangues in great assemblies of the people. Pastors and preachers often referred to the war, and sermons were frequently preached upon it. A text often chosen was 1 Kings xxi. 3. Here is the substance of a famous discourse delivered by a school-teacher in the Palace Church before the Queen, and in many other places, and which never failed to be enthusiastically received and to be punctuated by applause :—

NABOTH'S VINEYARD (1 Kings xxi. 3)

“ Ever since the confusion of tongues at Babel, and the scattering of the people on the face of the earth, God has decreed that the people of one language should be one nation. He has not permitted the nations to mix together ; but has settled them each within their own borders. Therefore they are strangers and deceivers who obstinately lay claim to a land which is not their own. God has placed the ancestors of the French in France. We are in error, therefore, if we say France belongs to us. God placed the ancestors of the Malagasy here in Madagascar. In like manner, therefore, others are wrong when they say the third part of Madagascar belongs to them.”

Then after a graphic description of the coveting of Naboth's vineyard by Ahab, the preacher continues—
“ It is just so that the French covet our vineyard. They speak smooth things to us, but all the while they are

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secretly saying 'We shall have it.' But shall they have it? By no means. Lo! they are like a man who goes to the trouble of digging the ground for nothing. They dig for another. They shall never become owners of the land in Madagascar. They are foolishly troubled about what belongs to another. They see a land well peopled and they think they are just about to get it. They behold a country where the food is cheap, and they covet the richness of it. Here they pretend to be as simple as women, but they are as cunning as men. Across the water they pretend to be friends, but it is only to get a chance as enemies.

"I may surprise some of you by thus exposing the designs of the French. A little while before it might have been said, 'It's like the cloth-sellers in the market: they each praise up their own.' I tell you the iron does not get hot without fire, the ball does not speed through the air without powder, the mouse does not skip about unless the cat is fast asleep, the rat does not make a rattle unless the light is out, the hawk does not flap his wings without an object. No, no, the French are angry with us and want the country. They think there is no God, and care no more for doing the right. They look upon our littleness and don't pretend friendship any more. But listen now to this illustration.

"One day there was a child carrying some bananas for sale, and by chance he came upon a full grown man who feared not God. Said the man 'what have you got there?' 'Bananas,' replied the child. 'Then I will buy some' said the questioner, and, suiting the action to the word, took a big bunch and ate them all up. On the child asking for the money, however, the man threatened to thrash him. 'Oh! you think I'm alone,' said the

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little one, 'but I tell you I'm not'; and, girding his loins he was preparing to hold on to the robber until help should come. 'That's it, is it? you young rogue,' exclaimed the big one. 'I'll soon let you know what it is to dare me'; and he made a run to kick the child to the ground. But his foot catching in a tuft of grass he came down with a thud, and broke his leg. 'There,' cried the small trader, 'didn't I tell you I was not alone. God is my helper, and He has made you break your leg.'

"Well it's just like that, friends, the sweet banana is our native land, and where is the nation that does not covet it? Its inhabitants are like the poor robbed and browbeaten child. The foreigner came up country and thought he could soon overcome us. His evil is like the kick the man was going to give the child. The malice of the priests is like the grass in which his foot caught; and now they are all fallen into the pit of regretfulness and repentance, and they cry out in bitter grief 'Oh! that we had not done it.' And why, my friends? Ah! they returned evil for good and happiness bade them good-bye. Well, let them grieve to their hearts' content there on board the ships. The Lord will not give this land to others.

"Naboth was a just man and obstinately refused to give up his land. So Ahab was obliged to practise deceit. It is so with the French. They come to us with soft words, calling us children; but it is only to get a footing amongst us to establish their kingdom. They are gentle in appearance; but rough enough in reality. They are hens in the house; but long-spurred hens out of it. Therefore God will not allow them to have this land.

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“Again we see that Naboth did not act without an object. He was defending his inheritance, the place where he worked and supported his wife and family, and the place where he would have to lay his head in death. He was therefore bold to defend it with his life. It is just so with us. God caused the ancestor of the Queen to say ‘The sea is my boundary.’ God caused his son Radama to gird himself to the conquest of all the land ‘in the midst of the sea.’ God caused our fathers to make a shield of their head and a wall of their side to defend the land, and God calls us now to go and do likewise. Yes, friends, if we trust in Jehovah, no one can take our country.

“Don’t boast of your strength like Goliath ; but trust in Jehovah like Moses. Yes, trust in the Lord ; for if you have only a few pebbles from the brook, they will be turned into balls to pierce the skulls of our enemies.

“Look at the prophets, the saints, and the apostles, and have confidence in the Lord. David spoke truth when he said, ‘It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.’ Christ has power over all things, for all things obeyed Him—the tempest was stayed—disease was eradicated—devils were chased away—death itself was conquered. Here also His power has been felt—the idols have been burnt—polygamy has been destroyed—and many evil customs have been changed. Christ then is strong. Trust in Him. Yes, trust in Him in life and death—at home or at the war, in light and in darkness. He is our helper, He only can save.

“And again, one’s native land is hard to give up. Men will often suffer anything for fatherland. All

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plants and all creatures love the land in which they live. They will not take to a foreign soil. If it be so with them, much more so with us. Better a few herbs and a little salt here in Imèrina than a table full of dainties in France. Better a poor hovel and a calabash of milk here before the Queen than a grand house in Paris. Better a farthing tied up in a corner of one's robe to spend with wife and children here, than a basket full of money in Bourbon. Better a grain of gold here, than a big lump across the water. Better a sixpence of good money than a sack full of bad. Better a single bit of salted dry meat than a whole diseased ox that brings death with it. That is to say: Better to die in defending Madagascar, than live to be carried away captive by the French.

"Don't trust in yourselves, ye soldiers. Put your confidence in God. Ye are born of the land. Bravely then defend it. If you are put to the guns let them sound aloud to put an end to the fight. If you shoulder a musket, fire it off to defend your country. If you handle a sword, sharpen it to protect us from the foe. If you carry a spear, don't let it be bent in the presence of the enemy. Fight you well, one and all; and don't forget that if you die in defending your country God will take you to the land of happiness and peace above."

Then followed a remarkable story about a parrot, which was curiously inappropriate, and the final appeal to patriotism and trust in God.

"You will not die in vain. Your blood will cry to heaven for vengeance. Friends may not see you suffer, but the angels will see you. Wife and children may not be with you in the last sad moment, but God will be with you and bring you comfort. No, you will not

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die in vain, like the oxen killed at a funeral. There is always a cry from righteous blood."

That will give a tolerably correct idea both of native oratory and of how the Malagasy felt about the demands made by the foreign power whose forces were then engaged in hostilities against their country; and it was a natural desire to protect their fatherland, no doubt, which caused them to submit so tamely to the many hardships and exactions they were called upon to bear. This was especially the case with regard to the forced contributions levied on the people. For this purpose the Government did not hesitate to make use of Christian organizations; taking the hint, doubtless, from the former collections for the sick and wounded during the Sakalava war. A notification was sent to all the churches through the pastors and evangelists that a collection would be expected. Hence it became a veritable tax levied not only on the people who attended the churches, but on all those in various places who ought to attend. They all had to be present when the collection was made in order to give their share. As may well be imagined, this did not do the cause of Christianity any good. For many months the churches were the scenes of extraordinary and sometimes of uproarious excitement. It was difficult to go through an ordinary service and often to get any preaching done at all. The time was wanted for the collection, and if the service was performed in the proper manner the congregation had to remain till long afterwards to attend to what was then the more important matter.

The collection was made in all sorts of curious ways. Here is a specimen:—

I was returning from a service in the country and

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was greatly astonished to hear a mighty shouting in the large church of Ambànidià, which is situated at the foot of the eastern entrance to the city. Curiosity led me inside. The place was packed with an excited crowd, and the people were assessing one another as to how much they should give to the patriotic fund. The business had been going on for some time, as those present were determined that it should be done thoroughly. A few of the principal men had been obliged to give more than they had bargained for, and they had made up their minds that the others should pay out in like proportion.

In this place the practice was politely to assist the party under consideration to the platform, and ask him before the whole congregation what he thought of giving. If the people were quite satisfied, which was seldom the case, a shout of approval was raised ; but if not, dead silence prevailed, or a roar of disapprobation was heard, and this was repeated until the requisite satisfaction was obtained. Several very clever fellows seeing this adroitly availed themselves of the national genius for driving a bargain. I saw one such—a petty trader—go up to the platform with a dollar in his hand intending to give the whole of it only if he was positively obliged. He whispered something in the ear of the elder who was conducting operations, who thereupon called out “ Rabè says he will give one shilling and sixpence.” A perfect roar of disapproval followed. The man nodded to the elder who, understanding him, said, “ He will give two shillings.” This time indignant silence, broken by a few ominous murmurs, followed the announcement. Another nod from the trader, and the words, “ He will give three shillings ” from the elder.

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There were more murmurs, and an impatient shuffling on the part of the people who evidently had taken the man's measure. Then the intending donor, seeing he was in for the dollar, and making up his mind to the inevitable, gave a final nod to the elder, and at the same time passed on to him the coin. Holding it high above his head, this worthy cried out "Look, look! he says he will give a dollar." Then arose a great shout of "Izay"—that's it—and the contributor who had come safely through the ordeal and got off tolerably well, came down from the platform with a broad smile on his face; quite contented probably with the way in which he had given his alms before men, and joyfully anticipating the pleasure of assisting another victim to go and do likewise. These proceedings were certainly not very creditable, but the blame thereof must be put down entirely to the native Government who forced the people thus to act.

We were all heartily glad when the occasion for this sort of thing was over, and opportunity afforded for religious services to be conducted in the ordinary, regular and devout manner. But the end of the war was not yet. The French demands were too exacting, and the Malagasy reluctance to concede them too great. So we had many months more of dire confusion in the interior, and desultory fighting on the coast.

Amongst other signs of the determination to continue the struggle was a great war kabary or assembly held at Antànanarivo. Here is a general description of the scene I ventured to send home shortly afterwards:—

"Great preparations were made to make the event a grand success. Multitudes of people, soldiers, civilians, and schoolboys who could not then be classed in either

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rank were ordered up from far and near, and the drilling of all classes of patriots was pushed forward with a remarkable amount of energy. For weeks beforehand the open spaces in and around the city presented lively and animated scenes, almost everyone except the slaves taking their turn in marching and counter-marching, going through gun, spear, and shield exercise, and shouting defiance to the French with all the strength of their lungs. Anàlakèly plain was crowded daily with aides-de-camp and other retainers of the great men of the realm, and a strange assortment of all sorts of people, carpenters, blacksmiths, silversmiths, ironworkers, gunpowdermakers from the manufactory close at hand, labourers from the country, and even printers from the two mission presses, medical students from the hospital, and theological students from the college—all apparently vying with each other to show zeal in defence of the fatherland. All these ardent recruits, however, were not armed with breechloaders, muzzle-loaders, or even with spears and shields. Weapons for the multitude had not been found, and many had to content themselves with a long, thin stick, instead of a spear, and a short thick one instead of a Remington or a Martini-Henry rifle. On the tips of many of the sticks were fixed two pieces of tin to imitate the rattle the musket makes when the order to ground arms is executed. Comparatively harmless weapons certainly, but a preparation for something else.

“The Champs de Mars of Antànanarivo, the large plain to the west of the city, was prepared for the event a day or two beforehand. A large platform capable of holding several hundred people was erected around the

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Sacred Stone on which the Sovereign always stands when addressing her subjects on occasions such as these. On the stone itself a handsome canopy was raised, ornamented with scarlet cloth and gilded columns—the same as was used at the coronation. Beneath was a handsome Chair of State; overhead was a scarlet and gold crown, surmounted by the royal eagle with its shining outstretched wings. At each corner of the canopy was a pair of silvered spear blades crossed, whilst around the sides were the words familiar to all the sightseers on these grand occasions ‘Glory to God’; ‘God be with us’; ‘Good will to men’; ‘On earth peace.’ In front were carpeted steps, and just opposite was a large table on which speakers were to mount when paying homage to Her Majesty.

“That July 3 was a bright and lovely morning. The sun shone out gloriously, and comfortably warmed the invigorating air of a mid-winter’s day. Not a cloud was to be seen, and everything presaged a different experience from that of the coronation, when clouds covered the sky and a sharp shower wetted the dresses and damped the spirits of not a few then present. By ten o’clock, the mass of the people, or rather the male portion of them, were tightly wedged on the plain; but crowds filled the city, whilst multitudes of women and children lined the roads or seated themselves on every coign of vantage that they had secured at the break of day, on the walls and hills around. All round the outside of the inner square were many rows of spearmen. In front of them were ranged the ordinary rank and file of the native army armed mostly with old flint-lock muskets. Inside again there appeared various groups of officers, tribal chiefs, gaily dressed ladies and

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white-faced foreigners, in fact, all the nobility and gentry of the place, with here and there a hospital flag among them denoting the presence of the medical attendants. But what is this that breaks on our ear? A yell such as natives of a darker race alone can utter. There is a movement in the crowd; and a horde of wild, semi-naked savage-looking men rush along to take their places in the rear, a dirty rag round their waist being the only addition to nature's covering.

"It is now nearly mid-day, and we are still awaiting the sound of the cannon announcing the departure of the Queen from her palace on the hill top. Whilst we wait and talk over current events with our friends, we cannot help noticing some of the groups round about us and a few prominent individuals amongst them. Across the square are some of the scholars from town and country schools in holiday attire. Near the lads are numerous civilians in their gaily coloured silk robes, bright sashes and broad-brimmed straw hats, with here and there a notable person in a tall beaver, spotless front, prodigious green tie, swallow-tail coat and brilliant scarlet trousers. Close to our station are groups of young men looking smart enough, and not quite so fantastically dressed. Nearer still, however, are the generals, marshals, and field-m Marshals of Madagascar, mostly of the ancient sort, whose appearance has so often beggared description. We ourselves will not attempt any, lest the strangely shaped habiliments from various countries—the handsome cocked hats from England, the gaudy uniforms from France, and the heavily embroidered, thick, long-tailed coats of green, brown, and mauve colour from no-man's land—tempt us into merriment, and we be accused of making fun of the

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Malagasy army. So, passing by that grand old man with the capacious brown cloak whitened by the sunlight of many an Eastern day, and in which he is almost lost, we pass on to notice, in one word, the ladies. To the left of that worthy who, to change slightly a well-known couplet :—

‘ Walked like a warrior quite ill at ease,
With his martial cloak around him,’

are seated quite a bevy of dames, resplendent in all the colours of the rainbow—of which, green, blue, and pink predominate. They are called ‘ children of the Sovereign,’ and are more or less related to royalty. To their right and between them and ourselves, by the side of the road that the Queen must pass, is a gun with its company of artillerymen having gilt-edged black caps, scarlet silver-faced jackets and black trousers—smart and soldierlike they look—and there right opposite to them are the bandsmen with the faded red coats that we all know so well. They are now sitting at ease, but will soon rise and blow loud enough to the honour of the Queen.

“Whilst Her Majesty was still on the road, the household troops filed in and took their places around the square. They were about 4,000 in number and looked quite soldierlike in their white tunics, dark trousers, brown bark hats and bright and clean breech-loading rifles. The regiment that made the most impression was the ‘ Mara-kely ’—Speckled ones—so called from their being dressed in striped jerseys. It was an odd but stirring sight, and took one’s thoughts far away to football fields at home where many a striped athlete struggles for the mastery.

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“ After the square was relined with these picked troops the head of the procession began to arrive. Court ladies in palanquins, dressed in splendid attire, then the Queen’s white horse on which she was to ride round the ranks and review the troops ; afterwards a crowd of officers and attendants, all the Cabinet Ministers, then the Prime Minister on his gaily prancing steed, and finally, at half-past one, Her Majesty herself, preceded by the usual band of singing women who clapped their hands and lifted up their voices, keeping time to the tap-tapping of an ancient drum. As she passed the little group of foreigners, German, Norwegian, and English, we gave her three hearty cheers, which, however, she was too dignified to acknowledge. A few moments more and she had left the cumbersome palanquin borne by twelve stalwart men, and had seated herself on the Chair of State under the canopy, with a large handsome Bible on the right of her, and a gilded crown on the left.

“ We strangers were invited on to the platform, and sat immediately behind the members of the court. The Queen’s dress pleased all the ladies present on account of its simplicity and neatness. It was made of white silk trimmed with pink satin, and suited its owner admirably. Her Majesty was plentifully but not offensively adorned with jewellery, and had fixed on her neatly plaited hair a pretty crown of pure native gold made by the royal goldsmith. The Queen looked nervous when, with sceptre in hand, she rose to address the assembled multitudes. After the formal salute, however, and the hearty bursts of acclamation she received from the people, she proceeded without any difficulty with her speech.

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“After thanking the people for gathering together in such numbers and showing their love for their country and their loyalty to herself, she continued thus :—

“‘I say to you, O soldiers!—for we are all soldiers now—I have done what I could to bring peace and to prevent the further shedding of your blood. Although we have paid money to the French twice before, I was willing to do it again—willing, indeed, to do anything that did not touch my sovereignty over the land and the independence of the kingdom. But they are unwilling to come to terms unless I consent to be called “Queen of Imèrina,” give them a third of the island, and pay down 200,000 dollars, besides making good the losses of foreigners during the war. That demand you have already rejected. I join with you in the refusal. Although I am a woman, I will show myself man-hearted to help you to defend our fatherland. Courage then, my soldiers. Neglect not your preparations; I will call you to the field when the enemy is really coming. Trust in God, for without His aid all will be in vain. Remember, too, that if we die in fighting for our country it will be a noble death.’

“Then followed the usual presentation of dollars as tokens of allegiance, and speeches of sympathy and aid from the heads of all the tribes, some of which were bellicose enough, and were loudly applauded. One man in particular delivered a most stirring oration, in the course of which he energetically affirmed that they would not have any more attempts at conciliation, but would fight it out to the bitter end; which declaration excited his hearers to the utmost and made them flourish their swords, spears, and guns, and dance around

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like so many madmen. The table on which these war-like appeals were made was somewhat too limited for the greatness of the occasion, and we thought once or twice that the patriotic souls who performed thereon would flourish themselves to the ground in a very undignified manner. The getting down too was a very delicate process, especially for the very old men. Some managed it well enough, but others dropped into the arms of attentive aides-de-camp who willingly came to the rescue, whilst one or two attempted to walk the plank fixed up to steady the table and succeeded in sliding down it. However, all got to terra-firma without accident, and the Prime Minister proceeded to address the multitude.

“His Excellency’s speech was long ; but throughout the delivery of it the people listened attentively, and their enthusiasm was raised to the highest pitch. At intervals, when the appeal for confirmation was made ‘ Is it not so ? ’ the crowd seemed wild with excitement ; while the band of big-wigs in front fenced and gesticulated in a most indescribable manner, and the solemn-looking pastors on the platform, in the most respectable of black coats, carried away with the general enthusiasm, flung themselves into some very unconventional and surprising attitudes. Afterwards the Queen mounted her white palfrey and rode round the ranks to cheer the troops by her nearer presence.

“The review over, Her Majesty formally thanked the people for their good conduct, bade them farewell, and amidst the plaudits of the multitude was borne back again to her palace, reaching it about half-past five o’clock. The crowds had been remarkably well behaved and were particularly respectful to ourselves. We

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walked home in the midst of thousands of spearmen and did not experience the slightest insult.

"Some time previously the Government had discontinued their practice of making generals of drill sergeants, and soon after the outbreak of the war had begun to engage the services of men of a different type with some military knowledge, who were, however, soldiers of fortune. The first of these was Colonel Willoughby, who had secured some notoriety in the South African war. He was soon made general and sent down to the coast to superintend the erection of fortifications near Tamatave and other places. Probably it was by his aid that the French were prevented from capturing the Hova position in the neighbourhood of that port. On his return to the capital he was received with great *éclat* and continued in favour for some time, but afterwards he became distasteful to the Government and was obliged to leave.

"It must be said, however, that neither he nor any of the other officers who followed him had a fair chance of distinguishing themselves and bringing real success to the native arms. They were always more or less under suspicion and never had a free hand. We saw a good deal of these gentlemen from first to last, but it is not necessary to relate any particulars of their proceedings."

CHAPTER IX

IN MADAGASCAR IN A TIME OF WAR—MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

THE country was in too disturbed a state for much regular mission work. Still, one was able to do a good deal in keeping things together, writing for the press, and in teaching and preaching as far as possible. I had been appointed to take over Mr. Jukes' district while he was in England, and, being alone, I found plenty of time to get about in it, looking after churches and schools. Occasionally also a visit was made to other districts.

In the month of June, 1885, I accompanied the Rev. R. Baron on a short trip through Vòniznògo and a little distance along the route towards Mojangà. After being out a few days we heard of a place where gold was said to abound, and curiosity led us to turn aside to look at it. Arrived there we saw nothing to confirm the report in the nature of the rocks or the soil so far as we understood their conformation, but thought we would examine the sand of the river for any evidence it might afford. Besides we both confessed to a desire to possess a little gold that we had procured for ourselves, even if it were only a few grains, so as to be able to show our friends.

Now searching for gold was prohibited by law, and we missionaries, who had something else to do, usually

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left the danger of getting into trouble on account of it to foreign adventurers who turned up from time to time. But the spirit of mischief took us—I will not say of gain—for we had no hope or thought of that, knowing as we did the kind of complications that a serious attempt would involve. We therefore told the men to put us down from our palanquins and stay where they were until we came back, which of course they did not. Then, each taking a tin dish from our impedimenta, we turned our trousers well up above the knees and went some distance along a shallow stream nicely shaded with trees on each bank, where we began to scoop out the sand from the bottom. Then, throwing out as much water as we could from the dish, we shook about the residuum and looked intently at it for signs of the golden grains. We saw plenty of bright yellow particles which the sun illuminated splendidly as it occasionally broke through the interstices of the overhanging foliage; but we soon discovered the truth of the old proverb, "All is not gold that glitters." They were only small portions of mica schist, and not an atom of the real stuff did we find, although we went at it vigorously for half an hour or more.

All we got was the penalty, not only of the scarcely suppressed laughter of some of the men who had been peeping at us through the bushes, but of the insufferable smarting of the bites from innumerable mosquitoes whilst we were continuing the process of dipping and washing for gold. They were dreadfully annoying, and when we came out of the stream the part of our legs from the end of the turned-up trousers to the water line was one gory mass of red; for here the day mosquitoes were just as bad as those which fed

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on the pilgrim and the stranger by night. We carried with us both the marks and the smarting for days, and we inwardly resolved that not all the gold of Golconda should tempt us to venture on the same experiment again.

We had a great deal of trouble with the governor of Malàtsy who put a stop to Mr. Baron's examination of the surrounding hills. My friend was a clever and enthusiastic botanist and geologist, and scarcely ever lost an opportunity of increasing his knowledge. The governor, however, could not understand the difference between the pursuit of science and the search for gold. He had had some trouble with one of the soldiers of fortune employed by the Government who passed that way some time previously; but it should be remembered that the instructions given to these men as to their dealings with foreigners were very strict and were not to be disobeyed with impunity. This official was averse to our going either north-east or south-east, and he wanted us to return by the way we had come. But notwithstanding the distracted state of the country we desired a change of route homewards, and imprudently took our way through the borderland to the north-east, so as to strike the river Bètsibòka, and then to come south.

It was a sort of No-man's land, with only a small hamlet here and there at wide intervals; and the men were in a highly nervous state all the way, and ready to bolt at the least alarm. Whilst we were having our mid-day meal my companion suddenly fired off his gun. There was an instant stampede, and we afterwards found that one fellow had actually thrust his almost naked body through a thicket of thorns and must have suffered severely from the scratches he received. The people

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at one out-of-the-way place fled at our approach and quickly hid themselves in the bush. The next place, to which we came long after dark, we found shut and barricaded, affording us apparently no prospect of admittance, much less hospitality and rest. We shouted and shouted, and then fired off the gun. For a long time there was no response and no sign of life within. Then we saw one dark form after another stealing towards the gate, and, after standing afar off and trying to peer through, a little man was sent forward to parley. There was still no admission, as the people were too much afraid ; but happily there came up a couple of men who had seen us pass their abode some distance away. These had no doubts about our peaceable intentions ; and, being evidently men of some authority, they roughly pushed aside the bars of the gate and gained for us an entrance. When we were once in, the villagers treated us very kindly and we had a capital night's rest.

The next day we had another adventure indicative of the unsettled state of the country and the misery of its inhabitants, who literally dwelt in the midst of alarms. About 2 p.m. we saw two parties of men away there on the mountain and directly in our line of march. "Robbers," said my men, and they wanted to wait for Mr. Baron and the rest of our people who were behind. "No," said I, "go on ; we will wait when we get up to them." They went on with reluctance, and when we were nearing the place some of the strangers disappeared. We waited awhile for more of our people to come up, and then made another advance. There were three of the others in front, and our guide and three of our men approached. "Put down your spear and come on," said they to the guide. "No," rejoined

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he, "you are three to one; let us talk as we are." They did so, and the explanation was quite satisfactory. They in their turn thought we were robbers, and the three were left to watch while the rest had gone on to their village to give the alarm and procure further aid.

We all journeyed together, and on the road they told us what had befallen them. The year before, marauders had surprised their town in the night, and after killing some of the residents had carried eighteen others into slavery. Ere we reached the place—Ambòhimanjàka—we were joined by some of their returning comrades who were now fully armed and evidently expected a fight.

We found the place deserted. Most of the women and children had got across the broad Bètsibòka whilst others were hiding in the bushes and marshes around. Poor folk! Messengers were sent out to them and they were soon reassured and made their way back to their wretched homes once more. On the morrow, ere we ourselves crossed, we managed to gather them together and talk to them for a while about the Prince of Peace and the land where war's alarms never come, and where the blessings of His reign are for ever enjoyed.

As the congregations in the Bètsimisàraka country south of Andòvorànto had been cared for to some extent by my predecessor, it was deemed advisable that I should pay them a visit and help them as far as possible. Accordingly I left the capital on August 29, and the next day found myself well on my way through the Angàvo valley, travelling over the same ground along which I had taken wife and children a little more than two years before. But if I had had the heartache thinking of them when staying at the rest-house in

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the upper borders of the forest, I had it more so here ; for during the night I had a very vivid dream of the loved ones at home, and it haunted me all through the day and brought tears to my eyes and a great lump in my throat.

On arriving at Andàkana, the place where we had to cross the Màngòro, I learned that a strong reinforcement for the army was just in front and that in the town was a sick soldier who needed some help. I went to see him and to my surprise found that he was one of my own lads from Tslafàhy. He had been ill before starting, but nothing would avail with his superior officers. He had been carried all the way in a palanquin, and there he was, poor lad, sick unto death, attended by his devoted mother and a few friends. How my heart bled for him ! But I could do nothing else than minister spiritual consolation and leave a few things to make his passage to another world as easy as possible. A little further on at Mòramànga, I came across the army, about 3,000 strong, and learned something of its condition. It was wretched in the extreme. The Queen had given the men two shillings each and a piece of cotton cloth for their loins, but they had mainly to look after themselves. There was no doctor in the camp and no medicine. There was one very old soldier dying of dysentery by the roadside. He was being humanely tended by his captain, but he had only a few more hours to live.

Alas ! I could render no effectual material aid. But I paid a visit to the commander and asked him to call together some of the preachers and other Christians amongst the men. They came into the church and after saying a few words and reading and praying with

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them I gave them for distributions a couple of dollars, one hundred copies of the Acts of the Apostles and one hundred small hymn books. There were several amongst them that I knew and all seemed grateful—one young man coming forward and kissing my hand while the tears rolled down his cheeks. I could not help grieving again as I wondered how many of these poor fellows would reach their homes in their beloved Imèrina again. I was glad to get away and pursue my journey once more. I stayed at some of the forest villages *en route*, preaching when I could get a congregation, and making what arrangements were possible for teaching the children. But it was all very unsatisfactory, and I fear little good was done. The places on the road were almost hopeless because of the many temptations to which the villagers were exposed.

At Andòvorànto I stayed by invitation in the compound of the Rev. Mr. Jones, the S.P.G. missionary, and after much conversation was able to adjust some of the differences which had existed between the agents of the two societies. Our friend had had a lot of trouble in consequence of the disturbed state of the country, and there is little doubt that, but for his determination and bravery, the mission premises would have been destroyed by marauding bands. Before leaving for the south I was able to help him prepare his lantern, when we gave an entertainment to the children of both schools.

Vàtomàndry was the next important place, a port where a fair amount of trade was being carried on. We stayed several days, as there was much to be done enquiring into the state of affairs. The lot of the evangelist was found to be a hard one, and there was small encouragement to work. As was so often the case

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where promises of money were made, little had been given, and the help from the Society was far from sufficient. The governor, too, was a very indifferent character and a great hindrance to religion.

After passing one or two villages along the road and seeing some of the people, we went on to Mâhanôro. Here the governor was an old friend, Ràinisolôfo, my former assistant in the Palace School. But he, too, like so many others from Imèrina, was largely spoiled by a position of honour and responsibility without regular and adequate pay. Living by one's wits and various exactions from the people, besides being expected to send up considerable sums to the Government and one or two big-wigs in Antanànarivo, was not conducive to moral and spiritual progress. I was not surprised to find him charged with not a few reprehensible doings. Still, to some extent he was as he had been before, and he kept up considerable interest in religious and educational work.

This is how he dealt with a fellow who professed to be a diviner and made a fine thing out of it. One day he sent down to him some cow dung nicely enclosed in two plates and wrapped in paper, with the request to be told whether it was good to eat. After working the oracle the diviner said to the messenger, " Yes, let him have no fear about it. He has only to take this medicine with it and he will live a long time."

Then the governor, taking a lot of people with him, paid a visit himself to the diviner and asked the same question. A similar reply was given. " Well, would you eat the stuff and drink the prescribed medicine yourself ? " enquired his visitor. " Yes, of course," said the diviner. Then the parcel was opened, to the utter

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confusion of the imposter ; and when he would neither eat the one nor drink the other he was punished for cheating the people, and sent right away out of the district.

The journey up afforded little of incident. At one place they brought to me a poor lad trembling with fever. He was a boy from one of the schools in the near district, and he had been sent to help fetch his father's body from Mâhanôro. The people often did this when a relative died away from home. It was quite in accordance with custom, and was one of the things that made military service to be so much dreaded.

At another place we met a Captain du Verge, an American, and eight Creoles from Mauritius, walking up to offer their services to the Government. They appeared very sanguine of success ; but as the expectations of pay in ready money and concessions of land were high, I doubted whether they would be accepted on anything like their own terms. The gallant captain on his arrival succeeded in ingratiating himself with the Prime Minister, and some kind of an arrangement was made. I called at his house to see him and found one of his men fully armed standing sentry at the door. They had all been engaged under a sort of military compact before setting out from Mauritius, and were under strict discipline. Shortly afterwards they started off for the seat of war on the north-west coast, and for a long time nothing was heard of them.

Early in the following year I took another journey to the coast, going over much the same ground, and then went northwards to go round the Hova camp near Tamatave, and back by way of Antsihànakà. I had first of all, however, to visit some of the principal centres in the near district and to conduct a series of

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examinations, during which many hundreds of scholars were examined—a most laborious and trying work.

While at Ambòhimalàza, where Ikèlimalàza—the “Celebrated Little One”—was formerly kept, I heard the story of the dreaded fetish from the teacher Rabènja, the son of the chief keeper. It appears that during one of the old wars seven soldiers from this district entered a house in search of charms. The woman said they might have their choice of any that were hanging around the place, except one in the corner which belonged to her husband and from which she could not part. But the men, thinking perhaps that this was the most powerful, coveted it above all the others and would not be denied. Said the woman, “No, I can’t let you have that, for when my man comes home and finds his god gone he will kill me.” “No he shall not,” replied they, “for we will take you away too”; and they took her, and on the road she told them all the wonderful things the fetish could do and all the taboo concerning it that must be followed. So it was duly established in its new home, and its fame grew and grew until it became the most potent and the most revered in the kingdom.

At Bèparàsy, in the Bezànozàno country, where a very diligent and devoted evangelist was at work, we had quite a high day at the scene of his labours. Turning to with a will, we altogether transformed the appearance of the wretched little place called a church in which the children were taught and where services were held. We found it hard work, however, making a platform and a table to serve as a desk out of a few rough boards, without a saw and by the aid of a chopper and only two or three nails. But we managed it somehow, and

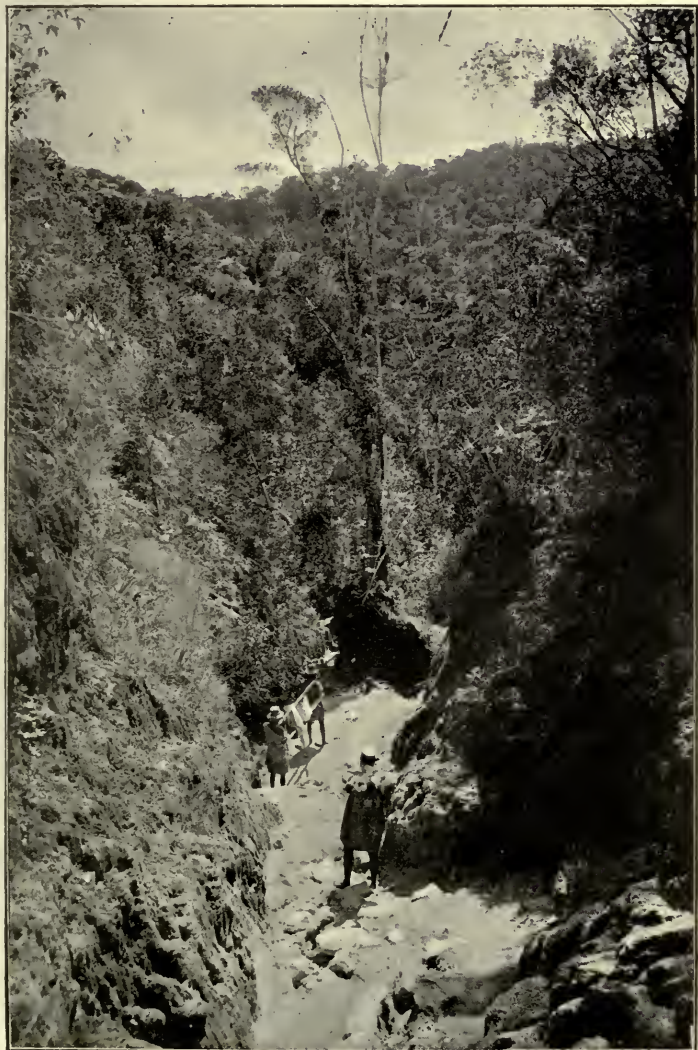
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the people and the children were quite proud of our handiwork when they had gathered together. Then we had an examination of the very elementary school, and a small feast followed by a few good games.

One of the forest villages was *en fête* with some ceremony connected with turning away the wrath of the "Long-tooth God" which they said had come down to visit them. Every man, woman, and child had their forehead marked with whitewash, as was customary in these parts during the time of circumcision. They had just killed and eaten a white faced ox, and buried the entrails deep under ground according to the order of the sorcerer; and they were then engaged in making one another merry with rum and music, dances and rude games.

I expostulated with the headmen for permitting the encouragement of this superstition, and asked them to gather the people together to receive a message of another kind. They came in crowds and filled the space in front of the house; there in the bright moonlight, making their whitewashed figures look most weird, I told them of the God of love and mercy—the Great Father of us all, who, far from being angry with us and requiring any kind of material sacrifice, much less the silly things they were doing, to turn away his displeasure, was ever full of loving kindness and tender compassion. But although I was as simple and as earnest as I could well be, I fear that very few of those benighted souls had any glimmering of the good news then proclaimed.

At Māhanòro I found that Ranàivo, the young evangelist recently sent down, was doing a capital work both in teaching and preaching. In one respect it



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might be almost said that he was too good for the place. His blameless and zealous application to duty was a standing rebuke to many, who ought to have been proud of it and to have given his efforts their strongest support. But as it was, they were jealous of him, and did their best to persecute and hinder. For one thing his conscience troubled him about slavery, and he would not have a slave near him. So they accused him of making his scholars do menial work, because, forsooth, the few whom he had taken to live with him assisted him now and then in the house. I could not help thinking whilst there, what a difference it would make in the rate of progress if all our teachers were like him.

Vàtomàndry had grown to be twice the size during the year owing to the large increase of trade caused by the occupation of Tamatàve. The place was full of foreign traders, and crowded with porters of goods to and from the capital and other places. I was called to see one of the former who was sick unto death, and afterwards conducted the funeral. I often felt sorry for these poor fellows carrying on business under such hard and unhealthy conditions ; but they frequently made things worse by the way in which they lived, even if they were not guilty of the grossest of vices. A moral fall was only too easy in that hotbed of depravity and temptation, and I was often saddened by some serious cases I came across.

At Vatomàndry I met a member of a well known aristocratic family who had had a very adventurous career. He was wrecked close by, and was one of only a few survivors from the ill-fated ship. Then afterwards, though taken with a severe attack of fever, he

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succeeded in getting up to the capital, where he was received into the Mission hospital. He was recovering slowly when he was given a hot-air bath, being packed into an enclosed sheeting round a chair with a paraffin lamp underneath it. But through the carelessness of a native assistant the whole thing caught fire and it was only after a desperate struggle that the poor man got out of it, being horribly burnt in the process. He ultimately recovered, however, and was able to get home to his friends.

Leaving this place we pursued our journey northwards along the coast, and on the way a little accident happened to a part of our supply of provisions. As it was so difficult to procure a change of food, I had taken with me a couple of wide-mouthed fruit bottles filled with honey to eat with the dry rice that had so frequently to be my fare. One had been already consumed and I was about to start on the other, but thought I would leave it for the morning meal, so I laid myself down to sleep with five of the men in the next compartment, separated from them by a reed partition. There was suddenly a loud report. It was the honey. There was an instant cry both from myself and the men, and hurried efforts were made to find the cork. At length, after much searching, it was discovered and fixed once more in the bottle. But half the contents had gone, and, spreading itself all over us, it quite spoiled our rest. We were fidgeting with the sticky stuff that had got on our garments all through the night.

There was one thing about it, however, which made it more endurable—we had it all to ourselves, and no one could laugh at our misfortune. Not so was the

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catastrophe witnessed one day in the capital. A man was carrying a box of honey on his head to market. This was a short length of the trunk of a small tree hollowed out, with a sliding bottom and top fitted in. Now the day was very hot and the honey consequently in a more fluid condition. Still the man seemed to be going all right and quite unconscious of anything about to happen ; when lo, the bottom slid suddenly upwards, thrusting up first the honey and then the honey lid ; and out it all came from top and bottom simultaneously. In an instant the poor fellow was covered, and the flies settled on him in myriads—to his own infinite disgust and the people's intense enjoyment.

From Vatomandry the evangelist and I took a short tour round the inland district. At one place the pastor had had no sleep for four nights from toothache, was consequently in a most wretched condition, and ready to do anything to have it out. I had only a pair of ordinary pliers with me, but as he begged me to have a try, I did so—twice. I could get no hold, however, the two tugs resulting only in a couple of mighty shocks. No, not that only. The shocks sent away the pain for the rest of the time we were there—much to the patient's delight. He naturally thought highly of my skill and his gratitude was unbounded.

At the next village the "Long-tooth God" had been in evidence. The people had killed an ox, and erected a rude altar, guarded with stakes, on the spot where they had buried the entrails. So the evangelist, Ravòkatra, induced the headmen to gather the people together, and then told them that they could not worship two gods, and that they ought to destroy either the building in which they were accustomed to worship

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the true God or the sort of substitute for it they had recently made. There was a great discussion amongst them, and they ultimately gave us permission to pull down the erection belonging to the new claimant for divine honours. We soon set about it, each taking an axe and cutting the whole thing to pieces and then scattering them all over the place. The headmen promised that there should be no more of it, and said that they would send some of the children to Vatomandry to be taught.

After being delayed for many hours at the broad mouth of the river Ihàroka, waiting for the wind to blow less boisterously and the water to be more calm, we were obliged to give it up for the night and seek a place in which to rest. We crossed in the morning in a very small and cranky canoe, and were extremely thankful to get safely over to the other side. These wide sheets of water, exposed to the strong winds coming across the sea, are at times exceedingly dangerous to cross.

At Andòvorànto, on the northern side, the evangelist from the Hova camp awaited us, and we both took part in the Sabbath service. But we did not linger more than a day, and started off the next morning to go round the camp, taking several villages on the road. Manjàkandrianombàna, to give it its full name, was not in reality a camp, but the temporary residence of the governor and his people. The soldiers were certainly round about, but most of them were at the fortifications in front. I was astonished to find that the services had been so well kept up, even at some of the more exposed positions, and the school had also been carried on, though naturally the teaching was

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subject to many interruptions. We stayed at a place just outside the town, and thither the children were sent for examination.

Thence we went a little further into the interior by a very difficult route, and then down the Volòina for five hours to the coast, and on to Mâhavèlona, where we could have bought a couple of very large turtles for three shillings. But not knowing what to do with them we did not make the purchase. I could not trust the man I had for cook to make some nice aldermanic soup ; and I might have found myself in the position of my friends Baron and Grainge when, on the north-west coast, they looked forward to the same luxury. Their factotum brought up a few pieces of what looked like dried skin in a dish. "Where," enquired they, "is the soup?" "Oh," said the man in astonishment. "That? I threw the water away."

We did not linger for these possible luxuries, but went on to Mahàmbo, where a curious experience awaited me. I had sent a man with my card to the governor and a polite verbal request that he would be good enough to show him a place where we could sleep. The messenger had given it to a soldier who took him to the house of a Hungarian trader. It was an ordinary native hut built of wood, canes and reeds, and thatched with leaves; and was being used as a general store, the bulk of the stuff on sale being foreign rum.

On my arrival the proprietor was standing at the door looking a most picturesque object in a cotton blouse and trousers made by himself. By his side was a Creole of English descent from Mauritius. I saw at once that in taking me to a rum shop the man had made a mistake, and I explained as best I could in

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broken French the circumstances under which it was made. His friend translated this into Creole patois which the Hungarian partially understood, and he answered immediately in indifferent English, telling me "that it did not matter. Would I not step in and he would do his best for me." Now I did not like the look of things at all. The man was evidently a questionable character, and his trade was disreputable, especially for an educated foreigner. But the invitation sounded hospitable and was hearty and genuine enough. There could be no retreat without discourtesy; besides he had been expecting me for hours, and it was now pitch dark and the rain was coming down heavily. Making a virtue of necessity, therefore, I thanked him for his kindness, and, striding past the rum barrel at the door, made my way into the place and was soon quite at home.

I discovered that my host was a real genius. Not only was he a practical tailor as regards his tropical garments, but several of his own paintings, which were very pretty, adorned the walls. He showed me, moreover, a beautiful violin which he said had cost him eight hundred dollars, and an inferior one for which he had made quite a respectable looking case out of native materials. On a barrel in a corner stood the skin of a fine civet cat which he had prepared and stuffed; whilst near by was a boar's skull and an excellent drawing of the beast. He had made also a model rat-trap, and a set of chess-men out of some buttons and pieces of wood. Moreover, he played splendidly and sang many Hungarian airs.

The Creole retired to his own place fairly early and left us to our own resources. How we managed to

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make ourselves understood I scarcely know ; but afterwards we had some singing, he in Hungarian and I in English and Malagasy. Then we had quite a long conversation in very indifferent French interspersed with bits of English and Malagasy. I gathered that my good host had been away from his native land for over two years, and that he had left there a motherless child of eight. He had come out to Tamatave where his proceedings had met with the strong disapproval of the authorities. They had robbed him, he said, having fined him for selling drink to the natives. Probably they had also turned him out of the place. Certainly he had no love for the French. "*Elle est une nation misérable,*" he kept repeating. Why didn't he take to a professional life? "*Oh !*" was the reply, "*n'est pas beaucoup d'argent.*"

He was evidently able to prepare tobacco, several rolls of which lay on the table with a motley collection of other articles for sale. He told me with great glee how he had tricked the Hovas from the interior by selling them cigars nicely done up in a box as if from abroad ; eight-penny worth of their own Antanànarivo cigars for six shillings. "*Oui, certainement,*" he added. "*N'était pas bon, ceci ?*" and a broad smile broke over his countenance. How could one help smiling too. It was a case of "the biter bit."

My new-found friend showed me his stock of books—mostly light French literature, but amongst which were also a French and an English Testament. This afforded an opportunity for a talk on religious subjects. He called himself a Calvinistic Protestant, but he did not believe in the divinity of Christ. Theology, however, soon took us out of our depth, much to my regret,

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as we did not know sufficient of the language in which we were trying to express ourselves clearly to one another. So we had to come down once more to ordinary subjects. I could not but feel sorry that a well educated, accomplished and handy man like him should occupy such a wretched position, and be content to be selling rum to drunken natives at sixpence a quart. Yet he seemed cheery enough over it, and said he felt like Robinson Crusoe on his desert island and quite happy in his loneliness.

Notwithstanding my incongruous and unpleasant surroundings I had a good night's sleep, but I did not stay to breakfast with my eccentric host. Thanking him for his hospitality and good-fellowship, I bade him farewell, and receiving from him as a souvenir "*Mœurs Parisiennes*," I was sorry I could not leave him anything more valuable and useful than a few small books in the native tongue. After a service in the nice new church, followed by a friendly chat with the governor, who said he had taken the devotional part in the service in the Palace Church when I preached there some years before, we set out for Fènoarivo, and arrived about 4 p.m. There again the governor was very friendly. He had been a great help to the Christian cause, which, notwithstanding the trials incident to a state of war, had made considerable progress since the former tour up the coast.

The journey up from this place was very difficult and wearisome, and I was glad to reach the shore of lake Alàotra once again, and thence on to Ambàton-drazàka. How desolate and dreary the place looked without a sight of the kindly faces of Mr. and Mrs. Pearse who had been transferred to the Bètsilèo mission. I

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stayed in their empty house, and was glad to find that the people remembered them with so much gratitude.

The governor here was an old acquaintance, being no other than one of the lads whom we had taken into our house shortly after our first arrival in the capital. He told me about his brother Ramiàndrisòà, the other lad who had got into sad trouble because he had released his two slaves. He was a sincere Christian, and had for a long time been thinking about the inconsistency and sin of slavery. The act had given great offence to his relatives and the chief men in the palace. Indeed, he had been called before the latter and very severely admonished. Asked why he had done it, he bravely replied that it was in order to carry out our Lord's command, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you." No satisfactory reply could be given to this; but he lost his position as a favourite assistant in the palace, and was afterwards banished to a distant part of the country, as the authorities were afraid of others following the noble example he had set. Subsequently, however, this decree was cancelled and he regained his position of favour, as his honesty and integrity were greatly valued.

The war had interfered greatly with the attendance of the people at church. There was a poor congregation, but I was glad to see a tolerably good Sunday school and that the governor was engaged in teaching an adult Bible class. We were off again early next morning, and after a hot, wearisome journey of four days reached the capital once more. Soon after I was taken ill and remained incapacitated for several weeks. It was no wonder. The travelling about for so long a time in the hot sun over some of the roughest and

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worst roads in the world had been too much for me, and I required a good long rest.

In the meantime there had been much talk of a truce and an ultimate agreement to end the war. The French must have been thoroughly weary, and the Malagasy more than weary. Besides the ever-recurring news of disasters and occasional victories in distant places, there was the constant strain of providing reinforcements and all the misery and suffering that this implied, and the necessity for securing adequate defence against the bands of marauders that attacked places comparatively near the capital. People said that many of these were composed of conscripts, who had deserted from the army and had in consequence become outlaws.

At one time Imèrina was in a terrible condition. The Sàkalàva were making raids on the border villages, and after killing the men were carrying the women and children into slavery ; whilst companies of desperadoes were going from place to place in the nearer districts, committing all kinds of outrages and laying hands on whatever they could find.

The people were thoroughly alarmed. In many places in the country the deep ditches around the villages were put in order and the old stone gateways repaired, and no one was allowed in after the large stone was once rolled into place. Then a watch was set and kept up the whole night long. It was no wonder that, as a state of panic prevailed, people sometimes killed innocent strangers through fear, and at others wreaked a terrible vengeance on those about whose guilt there was no doubt. Here is an instance of the former :—Six porters on their way to the coast in search of goods to carry up, stopped at Anòsibè,

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where they were apprehended as suspicious characters, and fined before being released. They then moved on to the next village and began preparing their mid-day meal, but, the people there becoming suspicious also, they were afraid to remain and began to move off once more. A crowd followed them and raised a hue and cry. The reputed robbers were caught and delivered over to the local police, but these representatives of the law refused to take charge of the men unless they were first bound. So the people set on them there and then, stoned the poor fellows to death and threw aside their mangled bodies to be eaten by the dogs. The police afterwards reported to their superiors that the victims were caught in the act of stealing. Their remains were pointed out to me when I paid a visit to the place a few weeks afterwards.

This horrid state of affairs had been to some extent altered, as the Government had exerted its authority and meted out stern punishment to all offenders caught. The people, moreover, were better organized to resist any attempt on their property, and the outlaws had become far more timid and cautious. Still there was much unrest and suspicion, and everybody was relieved and gratified to learn that hostilities had ceased and that peace was in sight.

The preliminaries of a treaty of peace were actually signed on December 17, 1885, and formally completed and ratified on the arrival of Admiral Miot and the French plenipotentiary towards the close of the following month. The dreaded word protectorate does not seem to have been included, but the thing itself was practically conceded. A resident-general with a large escort was to be admitted to the capital, the bay of

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Diègo-Suàrez and the surrounding district given over to France, and a large indemnity to be paid. When the acceptance of these onerous terms leaked out, it produced much excitement and anger amongst the people ; but they were perfectly helpless in the matter, as those in authority saw no means of prolonging the war without the accession of a still greater amount of misery and suffering on the part of all. Submission therefore had to be made to what was regarded as the inevitable.

Towards the end of June in the following year I went down to the coast once more, and this time to meet my wife and the two youngest children. I have no notes of the journey either going or coming, but remember that the roads were in a frightful condition owing to the abundance of rain and the numbers of people, mostly soldiers and their friends who were returning to their homes. Many of these were wretched in the extreme, having exhausted all their means at the seat of war, and some were in a state of collapse and actually died on the road.

We had a very difficult and trying journey up. The rain was incessant, and the tracks up and down the mountains were very slippery and dangerous, and the mud in many places almost impassable. We were therefore only too thankful to find ourselves once again through the inner belt of forest and on to the Imèrina plateau. The rest and sleep, to say nothing of the luxury of a good bath at the new rest-house at Ankèramadinika were most acceptable and refreshing, and the next day we set out in good spirits on the last stage of the journey to the capital. The men went along in fine style, utterly oblivious, apparently, of their many

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slips and slidings down the mountains and their desperate struggles through the numerous miry sloughs of despond in the valleys.

The home at Anàlakèly, though fairly comfortable, was speedily transformed and made far more so ; for do what a man will he cannot make a place nearly so habitable and attractive as when a lady is there to take it in hand. Little necessities were provided and things perhaps that were not necessities, but only accessories. These were purchased at comparatively trifling expense, and, whilst helping to make up the *tout ensemble* of a decent and respectable dwelling, tended to promote the greater comfort and happiness of the inmates. As to meals, there was soon a very perceptible and agreeable change, which was most conducive to increased health and enjoyment. This will be more readily understood when it is added that, at a later stage when on the coast with no wife to look after me, I was facetiously described by a friend as "the man who had all his meals cooked in the frying pan."

Whilst in Antanànarivo the second time, Mrs. Houlder had little opportunity of doing much else than attend to household matters and look after the children ; for when the missionary in regular charge of Ankàdibevàva returned from his furlough, we became unattached once more to any town, church and district. Instead, I was appointed to be manager of the printing office until a properly qualified person could be procured from England, and of course this provided less means of interesting ourselves in the practical work of teaching. For me it was business all the week and preaching on Sundays in one place or another. Yet I liked the change, and it added one more to my many experiences

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of life and work in the mission field. What with the superintendence of the printers and binders, the looking after the machines, the sale of books and school materials and the making up of ledgers and issuing of accounts, the time passed pleasantly enough ; and I knew it was supplying a common need and thus facilitating the work of others. But it was filling a vacancy only, and I was not sorry to be appointed to Tamatave in the place of Mr. G. A. Shaw, whom it was deemed inexpedient to send back, owing to the attitude of the French towards him.

Now, before relating our departure from the capital, and our experiences on the coast, it would be appropriate to say something as to the condition of the churches and the organization of Christian work in the central provinces. But although this would be a delightful task, and would afford opportunity for many interesting and encouraging statements, I must continue to limit myself mainly to our own life and experiences, and therefore reluctantly pass on.

CHAPTER X

TAMATÀVE—WORK UNDER NEW CONDITIONS

REMOVAL from the capital to the coast was as great a business if not greater than coming up country in the first instance, as we had to take so many things with us that we could not purchase at Tamatàve except at great expense. At length, however, the preparations were completed, and after bidding good-bye to our numerous friends a start was made.

The journey was a very trying and tiring one, owing mainly to the fearful state of the roads; but in about twelve days we reached our destination without accident, and became for a day or two the guests of Mr. R. Aitken, whose house we expected to rent. It was that occupied by Mr. Shaw at the time of the French bombardment, when he had to turn out and leave most of his belongings to the tender mercies of marauding natives and thirsty foreign soldiers. We took it for the same rent and were to have the same privileges. It was, however, a small and inconvenient placé for a family, and we were not long in falling in with the suggestion made to us that we write home to the Directors to ask for permission to build a new one. To that end I obtained a lease of some adjoining land and awaited with confidence the result of the application. In the meanwhile we got settled in the old house as well as we could and turned our attention to

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work among the people. But we soon found that the promise of real success was not very great, owing to the many hindrances and discouragements which met us at every step.

The circumstances in which we were placed were very difficult. The town had a mixed population, varying from 3,000 to 5,000, according to the state of trade. Both natives and foreigners were of different kinds. There were Hovas from the interior—officials, soldiers, petty traders and porters, and people from various coast tribes, north and south, who had found their way to the port to increase their chance of making a living. Of foreigners there were a few English and French, several white men of other nationalities, and a considerable number of Creoles from Mauritius and Réunion. Besides these there were a small colony of British Indians and also several Chinese.

As might have been expected with such a mixed population in a seaport town, Tamatave was a very immoral and fearfully drunken place, and the temptations for natives to go wrong for these and other reasons were correspondingly great. Add to this the fact that the Hova officials had not a fair chance of being honest, because they did not receive any adequate or regular remuneration for their services, and that often they were guilty of serious acts of oppression, and it will be readily seen how little likely debauched and dissipated Bètsimisaraka and other coast tribes were to be attracted to the religion their masters professed. Getting their children into the schools was almost the only hope. But very great difficulty was experienced in doing this, as they were frequently required to tend cattle and do many other things. Their parents, moreover, were

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suspicious of the reason given for drafting them into the schools and held them back as much as ever they could. The scholars in Tamatave and all the places in the neighbourhood were very few in number. Still something was done, and up and down the coast many boys and girls acquired some kind of education which they found to be of value. These often formed the nucleus of country congregations, and were of considerable use in leading the singing and providing readers of the Scriptures when a regular preacher could not attend.

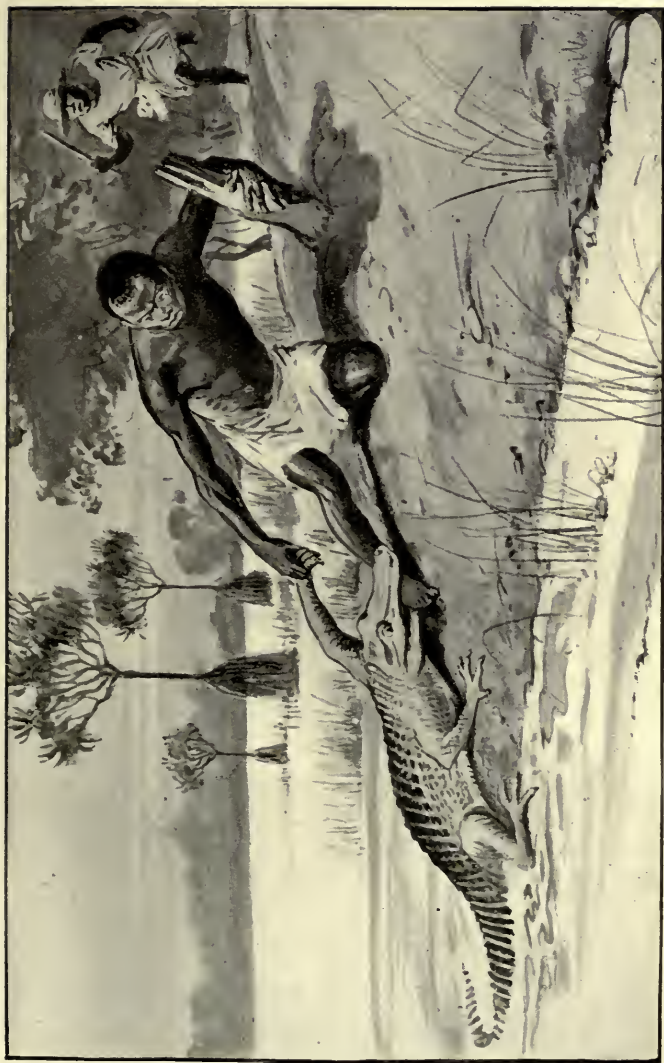
It was far more difficult to get about on the coast than in the interior, and sometimes not a little dangerous, because of the broad rivers, the cranky bridges, and the numerous marshes and channels infested with crocodiles. I never came across many of these loathsome creatures, but saw and heard enough of their voracity. I was astonished at the rapidity of their movements, as they looked such awkward and ungainly things. The slightest sound alarmed them. They would dart from the rock or sandbank on which they were resting like a flash of lightning, and it must be somewhat the same when seizing their prey. No wonder then they were so much dreaded. I remember to have crossed one wide marsh with great fear and trembling, as only the day before a man had been taken at that very place. On another occasion the narrow shaky trestle bridge by which we went over a morass for fully a quarter of a mile was actually under water for some part of the distance, and we had to feel our way along it inch by inch. The crocodiles at Mahavelona used to watch the narrow causeway leading to the fort and residence of the governor, and now and then they grabbed an unwary traveller.

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Again, a little lad was seized in the marshes, as he was gathering sticks, when there was a terrible scene. He was caught by the arm, but before the creature could drag him quite away some of his friends came to the rescue and held the other. There was a fearful struggle, ending in part of the limb being torn completely off and the crocodile getting away with it. Strange to say, the lad recovered, and used to walk out with his stump of an arm as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Then there was Moosa, a man well known to myself—indeed, he was for a long time in my employ. A most useful fellow when he was not in liquor, and very shrewd withal. He would have made a capital helper to a regular rogue who got his living by his wits. He had so many ingenious ways about him which, though he looked so simple and innocent, proved him to be a veritable adept in the art of caring for himself at the expense of another. We borrowed an axe of a villager one day when we were out, and coming away he very neatly packed it up with our things. Then when we were at home I happened to be annoyed with people's pigs and poultry straying through the fence into the compound, and had declared that the next thing found should be confiscated to our own use. The man seemed pleased and said, "Yes, sir, that's exactly what ought to be done," and the very next morning I caught him shoo-shooing through the gateway a flock of geese he had found in the public road.

Poor Moosa! after I had been obliged to send him away because of his fondness for drink he took to keeping pigs, and instead of letting them fend for themselves and forage about for any garbage they could



MOOSA AND THE CROCODILE..

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find, as was the custom of so many of his friends, he went daily to the marshes to gather food from a certain kind of arum which grew there. One day when he was intent on this business, his foot was suddenly seized by a crocodile which was lying in wait. The man in the first moment of alarm, let go his basket and punched the creature's head. He found, however, that this was a good deal harder than his own or any other native's, and in his desperation he bent down and caught the enemy by one of his claws. Then commenced a real tug of war. The crocodile pulled for his dinner, but Moosa pulled for his life; and because the former was a comparatively small animal, and the latter a big strong, powerful man, exerting all his strength to save himself from a horrible death, he began to prevail. Then the crocodile, in his astonishment, opened his mouth wide and allowed the poor fellow to escape. These creatures, however, seldom or never release their intended victims when once they have got firm hold; as the native proverb has it, "Once in the jaws of the crocodile, there's no getting out." Moreover, a big strong saurian of this kind has been known to pull down a bullock.

For some months after our arrival at Tamatave there was little travelling alone, so I had not to concern myself about the dangers of the way. There was too much to do in the town, especially as regards the building of a house and some kind of school. The natives, too, were intent on the erection of a large church which should be worthy of them and to some extent correspond with the fine buildings in which they were accustomed to worship in Imèrina. All this took up a good deal of time.

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The proposal to build a dwelling for the missionary was agreed to by the Directors, and a wooden house was sent out from home. But when it arrived it was found to be in some respects unsuitable, principally from the experience gained by the occurrence of a terrible hurricane on February 26, 1888; and building was delayed for a further reference home, and the gradual collection of hard native wood for the framed foundations and posts, etc. Shingles for the roof also were to be purchased, as during the hurricane whole sheets of corrugated iron were stripped off and flew before the wind like pieces of cardboard, one of these nearly severing a man's head from his body. Here is an extract from a report sent home at the time:—

“We have been visited by one of the severest hurricanes Tamatave has ever seen. The morning of the 24th was stormy, and rain came in windy gusts; but we thought nothing of it, as such weather is frequent here. Towards 10 o'clock the wind increased, and we stood outside the house on the sheltered side watching with little or no alarm the destruction of the cow-shed and the fowl-house, and seeing the débris carried off by the wind. Our attention was soon called to the state of affairs within. The storm increased and shutters were shut with difficulty, and soon the water was pouring in from the roof and penetrating through the sides of the house. To make matters worse, our little girl was very ill and required constant attention. The wind was now blowing furiously and shook the place to such an extent that every moment we expected it to fall down and cover us, though neither of us said as much to one another.

“The danger seemed to become more imminent as

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the hours went wearily by. Neighbours struggled through the storm to find refuge in our lower house. Mr. Aitken came and said the consulate was down and then went off to the assistance of the consul's wife. Our evangelist came seeking his wife and family whom he had sent off some time before. A Creole of Mauritius appeared with a child under each arm crying out that his wife—an expectant mother—was dying in his yard. We gave them brandy and supplied what dry things we could, and I then tried to rescue the woman by sending to fetch her; but it turned out some time afterwards that the messengers dared not face the blinding storm of wind, rain and sand. I could not induce the man to make the attempt himself; he was sick with terror and shaking with fever. At last Mrs. Houlder gave me permission to go myself. So I took off my coat and went out and put my head to the tempest. When I arrived at the other house a few men were, with difficulty, persuaded to go with me. It was a mercy they were. They succeeded and I failed. I got no more than a fourth of the short distance, and was then forced to struggle back exhausted. The men found the poor woman on the ground, exposed to the full fury of the tempest. She was brought in, attended to, and was afterwards apparently no worse for the terrible experience through which she had passed.

“When the storm became less severe and we could see through it, what a picture of desolation presented itself to our view—a sea of fallen or roofless houses. The consulate was roofless, and soon afterwards its inmates appeared, to take refuge with us until the morning. The damage done to the town was immense. For a long time the streets were impassable from the

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fallen trees and the débris of ruined houses. I saw one large cocoanut tree that had been lifted right on to the roof of a house, and another stretching all across the main street, supported by two rows of strong palings. All the ships in the harbour were wrecked, including the French man-of-war *Dayot*. All this was the work of about seven hours, for the hurricane was practically over by sunset. What a mercy it did not occur in the night when the loss of life must have been far greater. As it was, comparatively few persons were killed, though almost all suffered loss, we amongst the rest. My library was a wreck, most of the books being damaged by the water. We were days gathering up and drying wet clothes. So indeed was everyone. The place was like a washerwoman's drying ground, clothes here, there and everywhere ; and there was the cotton from the ships on the reef, many hundreds of yards being laid out along the ground to dry. I might add that when the wind stripped the corrugated iron from the roof of the consulate, Mrs. Haggard was in the act of preparing her outfit for the voyage home, and numbers of things, dresses and millinery and other light articles, were carried away and scattered over the place, most of them never being seen again."

A short time before this disaster, Mr. John Haggard, the British Consul, had made a proposal which gave us very serious concern. It was that he should leave me in charge as acting consul, with the understanding that on his arrival in England he should get me appointed full consul in his place. Now the offer was a very flattering one, and I have no doubt that my friend's influence with the authorities would have been sufficient to have accomplished his purpose in

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procuring for me this important post; but after the three days which he kindly gave me for consideration had expired, I felt obliged to decline, mainly through the reasonings of my wife who thought that it would be regarded by those we loved best as a dereliction of a higher duty. Probably she was right, although the post could have been occupied with credit to myself, with advantage to the country, and possibly not without profit to the cause we had most at heart. However, I do not regret it. An unselfish desire to do only what God would approve is always the best thing.

The position of acting consul was given to my friend Mr. Robert Aitken, but he did not live long to enjoy the privilege. He had been ailing for some months and had found the prosecution of his business almost more than he could manage, when he took a journey to the capital. On the way back he had an attack of fever and was never the same afterwards. He used often to come to dinner with us and then sit for hours on the verandah talking of old times in Scotland, and the good old mother who never failed to speak to him as opportunity occurred of God's goodness to all and the duty and joy of serving Him. He was a very reserved man and disliked talking on the subject of personal religion, but this showed plainly enough that his thoughts were going in the right direction and preparing him for the end. It came suddenly. Whilst we were at dinner one evening a difficulty experienced in holding his spoon was the sign of a fatal attack of apoplexy, and he died on the sofa an hour or two afterwards.

A few months before, death had come and snatched away the youngest member of our own family. A baby

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girl had been born about the middle of the year, and, notwithstanding our own fears to the contrary in consequence of many adverse circumstances, all had gone well. After the confinement, Mrs. Houlder took the children to Mauritius, where she stayed two months, while I remained to see to the completion of the new house and get everything ready by the time they returned. They came back in the best of health, and we settled down to enjoy the increased space and comfort the place afforded. A few weeks only elapsed, when the infant was seized with the fatal illness. All was done that was possible ; but after days of terrible suffering, during which the distressed and anxious mother wore herself out by the long-continued watching and nursing, the end came in a distressing fit of convulsions. I shall never forget her the next day, when the men arrived to remove the little coffin from the room, stretching out her arms and crying " Oh, don't take away my child, my child." Poor mother ! it was her first experience of death in the household.

Our little boy Willie and I followed the remains to the grave in the cemetery, and a simple service was conducted for us very appropriately and reverently by Mrs. Leavett, an American lady who was in the island on a mission from the World's Women's Temperance Association. I was feeling sad enough myself, but I endeavoured to be a comfort and strength to my wife, who naturally experienced the most sorrow and pain.

Whilst at Tamatave Mrs. Leavett took advantage of every opportunity afforded her of advocating temperance principles. I accompanied her to H.M.S. *Penguin*, after Captain Hall had been good enough to call upon us, and she gave a most interesting address

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to the men on her voyage round the world. Then she gathered together the English-speaking residents for a somewhat similar address, and spoke to the natives in each of our two churches, I, of course, interpreting her words. I am afraid, however, that the good accomplished was not very great, judging from the failure of my subsequent efforts to follow it up. I tried a Temperance Society amongst the many bearers and porters who came to and from the town, which was to be a sort of sick benefit society as well ; but though I obtained plenty of promises to join, not a soul attended the first regularly appointed meeting. I arranged also to give a temperance lecture in the church, but no one appeared. They were afraid of being caught, they said. Subsequently we had a meeting in the street with the evangelist and others. About a hundred persons were present and ten took the pledge. I could not get enthusiastic helpers, however, amongst the church members to carry on the movement. Great indeed was the power of rum in this place.

Early in the new year Rainàndriamàmpàndry was married by myself to his fourth wife, a young lady chosen in the capital by his son, who turned out to be a very good choice. There were grand doings in connection with it, spoiled, I am sorry to say, by the drinking of too much liquor at dinner by some of the guests. The marriage ceremony itself went off all right, and the governor gave an example to his friends by having it in the church in a proper Christian manner. The good man was not without his faults, but he never lacked courage in showing his respect for the Christian religion and in endeavouring to promote its interests. He took great delight in the erection of the new church,

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which was a fine large structure and cost the natives a considerable amount of money. To this church the Missionary Society contributed ; but the larger part of the grant, besides some private funds, was reserved for the erection of the pretty little building on our own land which was used for both church and school. I foresaw the coming of more trouble with the French, and determined to be on the safe side as regards compensation. It was well that I did, because when the war came and both properties were seized, the former was confiscated as legitimate spoil and never given back, whereas a proper amount of rent and also a sum for repairs were paid for the latter.

When the large church was opened an effort was made to establish a Sunday school as well as a branch of the Christian Endeavour Society, but neither was a real success. The evangelist and myself sometimes found more hope in the Bètsimisàraka lads we were training than in most of the regular members of the church.

We found it difficult to do much for the foreign population of the town. We had a short English service on Sunday afternoon for the few who cared to keep up the observance of religion in the strange land, and I much enjoyed ministering to my fellow-countrymen ; but when the Episcopal clergyman returned to his post, I felt constrained to give it up, as almost all the small congregation were Church people, and the division under the circumstances seemed not only unadvisable but altogether unnecessary. As to other foreigners, nothing could be done, for the language stood in the way. I often felt sorry, but there was no help for it. The Indians of the town were of course regular heathen,

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and kept a representation of their goddess in a makeshift temple in a back street.

A missionary in a place like Tamatave is sometimes called upon to take part in affairs with which he would much rather have nothing to do. On one occasion I was suddenly fetched out of church to go down to the consulate at once. Wondering whatever was the matter, I gave the service into the hands of the native pastor and hurried off. On reaching the place, I found H.M. representative was anticipating an almost immediate attack from a portion of the Creole population of the town. He was armed and fully prepared to offer a determined resistance, but he wanted one or two trustworthy persons to be witnesses of what might happen. It appears that he had arrested one of their number for some offence or other, and they had sworn to effect the man's release before he could be put on board ship to be taken over to Mauritius for trial. This seemed comparatively easy, as the prisoner was only confined in an outhouse; but they had not reckoned on the consul's courage and resolution. He took prompt action for defence and let his determination be known. So nothing happened. The rest of the day passed off quietly, and on the morrow the man was got safely on board the vessel.

In July, 1889, I was called to render some assistance in connection with the trial of Captain du Verge, the man I had met on the road from the coast to the capital, at the head of his small army of volunteers during the war. He had shot and killed a Mr. Stanwood, the U.S. representative on the west coast, and was accused of murder. He was brought to Tamatave by the U.S.S. *Swatara* and tried at the

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American consulate. The Rev. A. Hewlett of the S.P.G. was engaged to translate the evidence of native witnesses and I was retained by Captain McGowan, who conducted the defence, to check his translations; although neither of us, I believe, received any fee for our services. It was a tedious business, lasting several weeks, and interfering sadly with our work. In the end the man was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment; but the curious thing about it was that the culprit was not taken away by the ship to be imprisoned in America; he was confined in a small house in the town and guarded by native soldiers. I often used to see him sitting at the door as I passed by, and sometimes I had the opportunity of conversing with him and lending him books. I am under the impression, however, that after a while he was either taken away to be incarcerated elsewhere or released altogether.

Whilst work in the town was thus interrupted by circumstances connected with the foreign population, and the exigencies of the native government, that in the country was carried on under somewhat similar difficulties. But the main trouble was distance; the district we were supposed to influence being about three hundred miles long by fifty broad. Something was done by correspondence with agents scattered up and down in the principal places, and the despatch of books and other school materials, but visits were not forgotten when such were possible.

In the fall of the year I went as far as Ivòngo—where we had had such a pleasant time with good old Rabòngolàhy the governor—calling at various places *en route*.

There was not much encouragement to be found in

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the condition of churches and schools. Things had gone backwards instead of forwards, which was not to be wondered at considering the disorganization of everything caused by the recent war. At one place, for instance, the pastor, instead of discouraging superstition, had actually been assisting at a fetish festival in connection with some holy stones. This necessitated a kindly rebuke and a subsequent removal of the sticks, horns and cloth, which had been stuck up at the place. The schools in some other towns did not exist, and the churches had been allowed to get into a sad state of disrepair. Nevertheless, elsewhere there were many signs of intellectual and spiritual life, and considerable encouragement was given. At Fènoarivo, the governor was as kind as ever and just as intelligently enthusiastic in religious affairs. He frequently preached to good congregations, and was constantly stirring up the people to send their children to school and properly to support the teacher. Here, as everywhere, was the difficulty. The majority of the inhabitants did not realize the value of education, and saw no reason other than the word of the governor why they should be paying money to have their children taught. They would much rather have had their services at home or in the fields.

I was much pleased to find at Ivòngo another Christian governor. He was an old friend who had worked with me as an evangelist in the interior. He had not forgotten the work for which he had been originally trained, and he was doing his best for the highest interest of the people under his charge. I met here also Rainimàro, the freed slave, who thirteen years before had so impressed me by his zealous and self-

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denying labours at Manòmpana, the little village on the other side of the great swamp. He had just come from that place on a visit to the chief town of the district. But when at home he still occupied himself with teaching and preaching.

I would gladly have gone on further north to see for myself how the cause was prospering ; but I could not spare more time, and so I hastened home. The last day was a long, though interesting journey. Rising at one hour after midnight we pursued our course along the sea shore. The moon shone brightly over our heads and—

“ The floor of heaven
Was thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.”

As we went along, the eastern horizon gradually became clearer and we were soon presented with a most beautiful sunrise over the sea, the glories of which would beggar any description the writer could possibly give. Lacking the ability to do it adequate justice, he must content himself with the memory of the exquisite pleasure it gave, and simply say that the auspicious beginning fulfilled the beneficent promise of good. As was the dawn, so was the day. It was bright and ended in a splendid sunset and a warm welcome from a loving wife and expectant children.

The time was coming, however, when I could not look forward to such a grand reception, when, tired and weary, I should arrive from long journeys to find only an empty house, and wife and children far away across the water. The fact was that the former had suffered much from the climate since the shock of the child's death in the previous year, and as the months went by it became abundantly evident that, to save her own

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life, she must go to England as soon as possible. Accordingly I took the responsibility of arranging for her return at the end of December in charge of our friend Mr. T. P. Porter. At the same time I determined to go with her as far as Diègo Suàrez, and then visit the congregations in connection with the Society in the district of Ambòhimàrina, a little to the south of the bay.

We embarked on the French steamer *Amazon*e on the 26th, and after touching at St. Marie, arrived at Diègo Suàrez on the afternoon of the same day. Parting was of course a painful thing, but the prospect of meeting once more under happier auspices seemed somehow more certain than on the previous occasion, in spite of the severe illness from which my wife was suffering. I was very hopeful that, as the vessel went northwards and got further away, the more serious symptoms would disappear and give the sufferer a good chance of a thorough recovery in the homeland.

My own experiences, however, in the meantime were not to be of the most comfortable or the happiest kind ; for in a day or two I was attacked by an illness which seemed to take all the life out of me, and make my visit a very irksome and painful thing. As soon as the good-byes were over and the vessel was away, I sought a lodging in the town, and the next day went to pay my respects to the Governor, Mons. E. Frozer. He received me very kindly and gave me an invitation to dinner, when we had an interesting and enjoyable conversation, *i.e.*, so far as the difficulties of language permitted. I knew a little more French than when I was in difficulties with the Hungarian at Mahàmbo. Moreover, there was a gentleman present who professed to understand English, and translated for me when I happened

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to stick for the proper word. Only the beauty of it was, he could not always understand what was meant, and I had to translate for him again into French. However, we got on together fairly well; and his Excellency graciously gave me permission to go anywhere but on the fortifications, and do exactly as I wished, for which I was very grateful.

There was nothing to be done in the town, which was full of soldiers and had a nondescript population of foreigners and natives, the latter being mostly Sàkalàva and Antànkarana from the surrounding districts, and runaway slaves; all attracted to the place by the hope of work or a little trade. There was a large Roman Catholic church, but no Protestant place of worship, as that form of religion was mainly professed by the Hovas, who naturally wished to keep at a distance.

Their fortified post, Ambòhimàrina, was some distance off; but I found my way there the following day, as I was most anxious to see the state of affairs, and to assist my friends in the efforts they were making for the religious welfare of the people. It is a remarkable place, but no longer considered formidable from a military point of view. The palisaded town was erected towards the end of a lofty plateau several miles in extent, with its western walls going steeply down to the plain below. I did not see the northern and eastern sides; but at the south-western end there was a difficult approach up a narrow path and a final climb on a rough broad ladder to the top. There were no defences to speak of around the town itself, whose buildings were of the ordinary type in this part of the country. The only difference was the large brick and stone church with a zinc roof which had been built at

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considerable expense and not a little difficulty through the zeal and enterprise of Ramàka, the governor, and Ratovèlo, his lieutenant. Both of these were old friends, the former having been a pastor in Antanànarivo and the latter one of the most promising of my pupils in the Palace School.

Ramàka had been through some strange experiences on account of his religion. In the persecution of 1845, they bound him hand and foot and thrust him into prison, as an obstinate friend of Christianity. In the fierce outbreak of 1849, when the fourteen were thrown from the rock, they did likewise, and also made him drink the tangèna poison to see how far he was guilty and worthy of death ; and again in the determined attempt to crush out the new religion in 1857 he came very near to losing his life. Then followed the death of the old Queen and the institution of religious liberty, mainly through the efforts of those who had survived the persecution. Our friend now thought that his trials were over and that he would end his days in peace amongst his relatives in and around the old home ; and he and they were dreadfully troubled when he was appointed to this distant post. Indeed, he was afraid he should never see his beloved Imèrina again, and actually had a tin coffin made and taken with him on the journey north, that in case of death his remains might be the more readily brought back again and placed in the family tomb. But he had been led to see, he said, that the change was for a wise and good purpose ; and he was determined that, having come to occupy the new position, he would use his opportunity to advance the social and religious welfare of the people.

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The erection of the new church was quite an event, or rather a series of events ; for several attempts were made before success was attained. The people laughed at the idea of a building of brick and stone in that part of the country. There had never been any such thing in the neighbourhood. All the houses, even the official residence of the governor, were of the same materials—rush, grass and wood—and no other could be thought of. But Ramàka and his helpers made the attempt. They sought and tried various kinds of earth for bricks. Twice the rain came and washed their building to pieces. They tried a third time and lo ! the sun-dried bricks held together. Then they quarried and prepared stone for the two courses on which to lay the bricks ; and when the few bricklayers who came with them from Imèrina wanted too much money for doing the job, these earnest officers set the people the example of bringing in bricks, and laying them line upon line themselves. The fellows laughed and jeered ; but although the lines were not quite straight and here and there bulged this way and that, the work held together and the whole building seemed fairly strong.

The only money paid in the way of wages was the two pounds sent by me as a little help from the Society, and this was spent to buy food for the workers. These were many, all doing from time to time what they were able. Lime for the mortar and plaster for the outside they made from coral brought from the distant sea shore, the school children and as many adults as could be spared all going together and making a holiday of it. Thus the place was roughly finished and set apart for public worship, though the windows and doors and all the ironmongery and other things had yet to be

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provided. These, the leaders said, would ultimately be found, that the children might be taught and the services be conducted in greater comfort. Ramàka and Ratovèlo were evidently in downright earnest about the matter and also concerning the work of education. The former paid six shillings and the latter four shillings every month towards the support of the teacher, and this in spite of the fact of Ambòhimàrina not being a port, but a town on a bare mountain plateau, where they could get little money to maintain the dignity of their position and support themselves and families.

The next day I held a short examination of the scholars, ninety-seven in number out of the hundred and eighteen on the books, and I was glad to find that considerable progress had been made. The service in the afternoon had to be given up, at least as far as my part was concerned. My throat was dry and my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. I had to come out and lie down and do nothing for the rest of the day, which was a great disappointment, both to myself and the people. I was a little better the next day when I went over to Mèrimandròso, a village on the slope of one of the many old volcanoes in the district. I managed to get through a short service and then returned, and again took to my stretcher. The friends were very sympathetic and kind, bringing small presents of all sorts of things which they happened to have and thought I might be tempted to eat. It was little of anything, however, that I cared for as I felt full of fever and wanted medicine more than food.

I was a trifle better again in the morning, but got away with difficulty, mainly arising from the scarcity of bearers and the high wages they wanted. We reached

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Namakia, a place at the western end of the bay, where I rested for a few hours after having had some conversation with the S.P.G. teacher who had a small school there. We then went on to Diègo Suàrez, reaching that place in the early evening. I was glad to get there as my sickness and diarrhoea continued. The next day I was able to get some chlorodyne and quinine wine from the chemist, and this with a nice long rest and sleep did me good, and helped me through the day. I had a little walk in the town in the evening during which I gave away a few copies of the gospels to the French soldiers, some of whom appeared grateful for the gift.

The day following, the returning mail to Tamatàve came in, and I went on board as soon as possible, so as to secure more comfortable quarters and the services of the doctor. I was somewhat disappointed in the latter. He was a very abrupt and unapproachable individual. On going to him he looked at me fiercely and called out in a very sharp manner "Qu' avez vous?" I felt inclined to answer in the same tone, "I want you to see," but I thought mildness and discretion the better part; so I described to him as best I could my symptoms, and he was gracious enough to give me what was evidently a tonic, which of course I could have procured for myself.

I was thankful enough to get back to Tamatàve where I remained ill for a week or so, but where I could the better look after myself and get assistance if necessary from others. It was a trying time in that empty house where I had been accustomed to have the care of a good wife and the company of a couple of merry children, and I was only too pleased when I



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began to feel all right again, and I could get about as usual.

The next few months were spent in the town and its immediate neighbourhood during which I had several curious experiences of native ideas. In one of the village churches I was talking to the little folks about the stupidity of tabooing pork and other things, when an old man, sitting in a corner, shouted out, "Don't teach the children to eat pork or they will die." Again, when reference was made to the saying that "the passing of a lemur would result in the town being set on fire," the same individual called out still more energetically, "Yes, so it will." Evidently there was no convincing him to the contrary. His superstition was too deep seated and defied all reasoning.

Whilst in Tamatave we often met with native friends passing to and fro, or who came to stay on the coast. One of the latter was Ratiarà, who had been a student in the College. Like some others who had received an education at the expense of the Society, he had been removed from his position as evangelist, and given a Government appointment. His new post was that of judge, which, as the practice was for the judges to maintain themselves out of presents and fees from the clients who came before them, speedily brought our friend into temptation and trouble. He was unlucky enough to be found out in receiving bribes and was sent down to the convict settlement near Tamatave.

At the interview I had with him he seemed very repentant and humble. He told me of a circumstance which took place just before his departure from the capital. Amongst the friends who came to bid him farewell, was a pastor with whom he had been very

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intimate and in whose house he had often been a guest. Ere leaving, the good man thought it necessary to give him some sound advice. "Now brother," he said, "I have been moved to come and say one thing only. You seemed to have been chosen by God to preach the Gospel. Then the Government took you up and you fell into temptation. Now God is doing to you what he did to Jonah. He is casting you into the sea. You are now going off to it. I don't know whether the Almighty will let a big fish take you and cast you up again, but let us pray." Then he knelt down and prayed, asking God to bless the sinner with true repentance and bring him back to his home and friends once again.

Whilst I was talking with the convicted judge, a touching scene occurred, showing that he could not have been a very hard master, whatever was his guilt as regards bribery. One of the old female slaves of the family had followed him down to the coast, and coming in at that moment, she fell at his feet and clasping them in her hands burst into a flood of tears; and it was with the greatest difficulty that she could be restrained from continuing thus to express her sympathy.

One of our duties as well as pleasures at Tamatave was the entertainment of visitors—sometimes missionary friends passing to and from the interior, and at others traders or strangers from the ships. This involved a considerable amount of trouble and some expense. But we did not mind that, as it enabled us to be a little help to the travellers, and tended to brighten up our own lives. Occasionally however, it was very awkward, as the guests were more than equal to the accom-

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modation, and now and again unintentionally left behind them somewhat unpleasant evidences of their visit. But this perhaps was scarcely to be avoided, owing to the condition of the places along the road where they had been forced to stay. These visits usually gave us a splendid opportunity for studying character and individualities, sometimes to our intense amusement and sometimes to the contrary.

The visitors from the ships whose coming we most enjoyed were Christian people who were not content with a cursory look about the town, but who wanted to see something of the religious work going on amongst the natives, and to show sympathy with the workers. These were more numerous than we expected, and their visits were always appreciated, whether they were made by godly sailors from H.M. ships, sailors from the mercantile marine, passengers going to and fro on business, or travellers to more distant parts for the sake of pleasure. Two amongst many, I distinctly remember. One was paid by the late Mr. Tom Ellis, the Liberal Whip, who spent a whole day at the house and told me the secret of the dislike beginning to be felt by the rank and file, as well as the leaders of the party, for a famous politician who had not then turned his coat and given up the friends of his early years. The other visitor was a sergeant-major on his way home from Mauritius, who was greatly interested in missionary work and gave me out of his meagre pay a handsome contribution towards the new church.

Visitors of another sort sometimes came—gentlemen in search of concessions, and ordinary miners on the look-out for gold. A missionary was often of great

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use to the former and occasionally of some assistance to the latter. A concessionnaire—a certain captain, whose papers I had undertaken to translate at his urgent request, was staying at our house, when a party of fifteen miners arrived from Natal. He promised to engage six of these, and gave them a letter to his agent at the capital with whom they were to make final arrangements. I felt sure that there was nothing in it and that they were going on a wild-goose chase. But their minds were made up, and nothing could persuade them to change. “People always spoke of difficulties,” they said; “those who feared them never succeeded,” which could not of course be disputed. So I had the poor fellows up to dinner, and helped them to the best of my ability, insisting that if the captain did not pay for them to be carried up, he should engage a couple of porters to take what they called their “swags.” He consented, and they went away rejoicing.

I heard nothing of them for a long time, and had almost forgotten that they had passed through, when a letter came from the mother of one making enquiries concerning her son. He had been a clerk in Manchester, but he told me that he had had enough of clerking and wanted a more active and enterprising career. He seemed ill-fitted, however, for the arduous life of a miner, and my fears were only too sadly realized. On enquiry, I discovered that the whole thing was a fraud, that the party had been deceived both by foreigners and natives, and that the poor fellow was one of the first to sink under the hardships and privations they endured. Then I had the melancholy duty of conveying the distressing news to the painfully anxious mother.

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At the same time that these seekers after gold passed through to their fate in the interior, there was another prospector in the town who was returning after an unsuccessful attempt to make satisfactory arrangements with the Malagasy authorities; and was then, unknown to me, lying at death's door not a hundred yards from the house. He was a man, however, of a somewhat different stamp, and a very intelligent respectable fellow who had been my guest on a previous occasion. He was then going up country again, having been home and provided himself with funds to work the gold he had already discovered in several parts of the country. But no opportunity was afforded him for the successful prosecution of his purpose. Wherever he went, native jealousy and secret opposition prevented him from doing anything to benefit himself; and he was on his way back to England with his health irretrievably ruined—indeed so ill from rheumatic fever and other things that he was unable to direct a messenger to come and tell me of his sad condition.

How the news arrived I know not, but I hurried off immediately and found him lying on his back in a small hut in a semi-conscious condition, with a revolver by his side and about £140 in a bag of dollars under his head and a belt of sovereigns round his body. I gave him a restorative, and as soon as he could talk a little he told me he had been helpless for days; and, to add to his anxiety, the German miner who had come down country with him had tried to rob him in the night. He, poor wretch, had been shipwrecked on the coast, and, having lost his all, had tried to retrieve his fortune by prospecting for gold. He was miserably ill himself, and was, moreover, half starved and desperate. The

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attempt happily failed. His stricken comrade could not lift his hand to use his revolver, when the would-be robber was fumbling about his person for the cash, but he aroused his faithful native follower by calling for help, and the man fled. It was evident that the sick prospector could not effectually protect his property, so I said to him, "Jeff, I must, to begin with, take away all your money."

He didn't much like it ; but as there seemed no other way, he let me unbuckle his belt and remove his bag, and then I counted it all out before him and gave him a note of the amount. The next thing was to take it home, lock it up securely, and hurry off for the doctor. The medical man soon came, and, after prescribing the requisite medicine, he gave me instructions as to how to care for the patient. In a few days the sick man was sufficiently recovered to carry on a conversation with less discomfort, when I read and prayed with him, and helped him to believe that, whether living or dying, the all-loving Father would never forsake him, but would be ever ready to respond to his supplication with tender compassion and infinite mercy.

A short time afterwards the patient was deemed well enough to attempt the voyage to his native country. Then, when I had taken his passage and discharged his liability to the doctor, I paid over the balance of the money—upwards of £100—and he went on board and was put in charge of the concessionnaire captain who had been staying in my house. But this fellow turned out to be a heartless rogue ; for when the poor invalid got worse instead of better, and died at Seychelles, he took possession of all his money and said nothing to anyone when he arrived. He himself subsequently

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died; but long before that I had the satisfaction of signing and sending home an affidavit concerning the exact state of affairs, which had the effect of making him pay over to the relatives of the dead man every penny he had stolen from him.

As I had previously been north to some of the churches, I was desirous of going south as far as Vatomandry. A new evangelist had been placed there, but he was having much the same difficulty with the utterly unscrupulous governor as his predecessor, and it was necessary to go down to his help. There was also some serious charge of immorality to investigate which was causing great trouble in the church. On my arrival, however, scarcely anything could be done, as I had already feared. Everybody was afraid of the man in high position and nobody would speak out. Nothing therefore could be proved as to the case in question; but as so many complaints of the governor's conduct had been made, I felt obliged to declare that we could no longer regard him as worthy of confidence, though this probably would not matter much after I had gone away. The morrow being Sunday, I preached in the church on the woman taken in adultery, and endeavoured to impress on the people the necessity for charity and mercy as well as purity and uprightness.

Towards the close of the year my thoughts were turned in the direction of home as I was hoping that the Directors would permit me to begin my furlough before the most unhealthy season set in. In due course the permission came, and after arranging for the carrying on of the work during my absence, I went on board the French steamer on December 26th, to go by way of Zanzibar and the Suez Canal.

CHAPTER XI

TAMATÀVE—TOWARDS WAR AGAIN

AFTER a very pleasant stay in England, I left London on September 21, 1892, in the *Lismore Castle*, destined once more for a spell of absence from wife and children. Strange to say, I was comparatively free from sea-sickness all through the voyage, which was thoroughly enjoyed. We arrived at Cape Town about the middle of October. But we were only there a day or two, and then we went along the coast, touching at Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban. At each of these places we went ashore for an hour or two and had a look round.

Leaving Durban, we crossed over the southern end of the Mozambique Channel and steamed up the coast of Madagascar. Tamatàve was reached on November 1, and, as it was not this time in the occupation of the French, there was no difficulty about landing. I received, as was expected, a very hearty welcome from the natives, the evangelist Ravèlojaôna from Vatomandry and the school children with others coming down to the landing place in a body, and the governor with a numerous following paying a friendly visit afterwards. On the Sunday we had capital services in the church, some of the incoming brethren assisting by giving addresses. They went up country, however, as

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speedily as possible and left me to settle down to work as best I could.

The first business was to get the house in order, as the people to whom it had been let had taken strange liberties with it, and there was much to do before all was ready for the regular routine of daily work. Owing to the great difficulty of obtaining teachers from the interior, we intended to pay a good deal of attention to the training of Bètsimisàraka lads ; and for that purpose the evangelist had already brought some of his scholars from Vatomàndry. These with a few others from the nearer districts received special instruction ; and although their knowledge was but small and their capabilities moderate, they were found to be of considerable use in various ways. It was a matter of some difficulty to provide properly for their accommodation. At first they lodged with Ravèlo in the town, in close contact with all that went on in the wretched and filthy huts around them. But as that was not at all conducive to their moral and physical welfare, a couple of small houses were built for them in the mission compound. This, too, had its disadvantages, especially as the evangelist's wife was away and the boys had to fend for themselves. Still it was the best arrangement that could be made, and was fairly satisfactory.

As regards preaching, an attempt was made by the evangelist and myself to reach the outsiders by outdoor meetings at the close of the afternoon service. For this purpose we went to the Bètsimisàraka part of the town, accompanied by the boys in training and any others who were willing to go. These were a great help, especially in the singing, and sometimes their voices attracted a fairly large congregation.

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I cannot say that much good was done, as we found it to be exceedingly difficult to make these poor ignorant and degraded people understand the love of God and the elements of real religion. But a few joined us, and seed was sown which would bear fruit perhaps in after days. Some of the Creoles who occasionally stood around had queer notions of our motives and methods. Several wanted to borrow money, and one came with the assurance that, if we would hire him, he would speedily fill the church with his native acquaintances.

For this outdoor service the help of missionary friends who happened to be staying at the house was generally enlisted. One enthusiastic brother was as usual most practically energetic. He was preaching on the lost piece of silver, and in order to make the people more thoroughly understand he went round the ring and showed a shilling to various individuals of the company. Then when they had seen it, he put it under a mat and afterwards dropped it in the sand, saying "it was lost." So it was, for a time—and apparently for good; for when he came to give an illustration of searching and finding, it seemed as if he could not succeed in the latter part of the operation. He fumbled about in the sand for quite a long while before he did so, whilst the small boys, and possibly some others in the crowd, laughed and wished he would leave off and give them a chance. I am afraid this lack of dexterity quite spoiled his point and made the illustration unsatisfactory.

Systematic visitation of these people in their homes was tried, but apparently with poor results. Circumstances made it exceedingly difficult, and to some extent dangerous lest the breath of scandal should spoil one's work. Homes in the best sense of the term were few

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in number owing to the migratory character of the population. The houses the people lived in were the poorest of huts, occupied for a time and then left to take care of themselves, or sold to the new-comers for a mere song. The best of them and the most neatly and cleanly furnished, if the word can be properly applied to the adornment of such places, were occupied by single women, whose interest was to make them as attractive as possible. It was found advisable to give these places the go-by, but a visit to a questionable house could not always be avoided.

As before, there was always plenty of visitors at the mission-house, although there was no lady to look after them. We got on fairly well, nevertheless, because our old cook came back soon after my arrival. He had had enough of bullying traders, he said, and was ready to serve me, although he would not receive so large a wage. He was a very handy and a remarkably resourceful fellow. I laughed heartily at Christmas time, when there was a visitor to help me consume the fare, to see him, with a broad grin on his face, bring in a plum pudding, sauce and all. "Why, Ralèva," I said, "how did you manage that?" "It was easy enough," he replied, "I just went down to the Chinaman's and told him that if he would let me have a few raisins for a halfpenny I should probably be able to buy a lot. So here they are."

Amongst my guests there was a simple-minded foreign brother who showed his gratitude for nearly a month's entertainment in a very unusual and somewhat naïve manner. Perhaps he had heard that no monetary consideration was expected. At any rate, before he left to go on board his ship, he pressed my hand and said that "he had asked the Lord

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to pay me with His blessing for thus providing for one of His servants." It seemed odd, but the good fellow was no doubt sincere, and probably the blessing came in some form or another.

Early in the year 1893 we had another severe hurricane, though it was not so terrible in its effects as the one through which we had previously passed. The rain came down in torrents and the wind blew fearfully with more or less violence for forty-eight hours, sometimes coming in awful gusts, such as I thought every moment would bring down the house. The place stood firm, however, although it was built on framework with its bottom floor from two to eight or nine feet from the lowest part of the ground.

We had no sleep at all the first night. I was going about from place to place trying to keep everything secure, not always with the greatest success. The weather-side hurricane-shutter in the roof was not fastened properly, and I lifted the bar to get all quite fast. I had better have left it alone. The rush of wind at that moment caught the shutter and sent it back with a great bang. There was no getting it right again. It had to be tied with a strong rope and a mattress fixed up against it to keep out as much of the wind and rain as possible.

Towards morning the lower part of the house was filled with native refugees who had come in from their own wrecked and dismantled dwellings. The boys who were lodging in the school-house hard by, with the dear old Bètsimisàraka woman who was acting as mother to them, had happily just left it when the roof fell in with a fearfully loud crash. The house was not by any means a perfect shelter. The rain came in every-

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where—through the shingles of the roof, under the lappings of the corrugated iron sheeting, through the interstices of the walls, and even through the joints of the boards of the floor. It was curious how the wind drove the rain and the sand up through the boards. At one time when the blast was more than usually long and furious, it hissed and sizzled on the floor just like boiling fat in a frying-pan.

The ground floors were a mass of mud, partly from this cause and partly because such numbers of people had flocked in from the dirty roads for refuge. As to food, I managed to get a cup of coffee in the morning and then divided up what provisions I possessed. But we had practically to go without the rest of the day, as the hurricane continued and the wind and rain came down at intervals in awe-inspiring gusts. It moderated towards evening, however, and was much less violent throughout the next night ; and when the morning dawned the sun was shining in a calm and clear sky, as if no shadow of darkness had ever come to obscure his beneficent beams and bring such a tempest as we had just experienced.

The actual damage done up and down the coast was considerable. But there was less in the town than was feared. Great excitement prevailed amongst the traders and others, and those who had interests along the beach were very anxious. The sea ran mountains high, and drove far in through the streets and into the bush, and did a considerable amount of damage. But fortunately no lives were lost. I was very glad the mission-house stood the strain so well, as it had cost a large sum of money and great care had been taken to make it strong.

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To add to our troubles much sickness followed the hurricane, partly caused no doubt by the miserable conditions under which many people were compelled for months to live. It was no slight thing for the natives to be rendered homeless in the fever season, and to be obliged to exist in discomfort and wretchedness so long, before they could be properly housed once more. There were many deaths amongst them ; indeed, so many, that they got tired of attending the funerals and in some cases positively refused to do so—a strange thing for Malagasy, who think so much of paying respect to the dead. But what unheard-of changes in the civilities and amenities of life will not misery and despair bring ?

The foreigners in the town also, even the more well-to-do and better provided for, suffered severely from the ravages of malarial fever, and several died. Amongst these were Mr. Whitney, the much-respected American merchant who had been many years in the country, and my fellow missionary of the S.P.G. the Rev. A. Hewlett, who left to pick up strength at Réunion and there passed away. I never knew a more unhealthy, trying time. Almost everybody one met had a wan and weary look, and compulsory visits to the cemetery were all too frequent. Tamatave was certainly a not very inviting place to settle in just then. There was one new-comer who was perhaps wise in his generation in deciding not to stay at any cost. He was a sharp, bright young fellow who had come out from America to fill the post of agent to a large firm of merchants. “ What’s the good,” he said, “ of stopping to ruin my health here, even if I do make a pile of money ? I’ll go, and go while I can. I know there will be a row with the old man, but it will only

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be one short sharp interview and an arrangement about paying passage money, and then I shall be free to make a better job of my life elsewhere." And go he did by the very next mail, business notwithstanding. It was hard for some of us who were not usually subjects of melancholia to maintain a bright and cheery appearance. The dark days passed, however, and gave us all a brighter and more hopeful prospect.

From this period onward much of our time was taken up with the erection of the two churches connected with the mission. The Hova Christians, led by the governor, had already begun to erect a large place of worship. This had been blown down, as was the building in our compound, the fall of which nearly caused the death of the pupils who occupied it. We now determined to set up stronger and better places, the natives to devote their attention to the large building in the town and the missionary and his friends to care for the smaller one outside, which could also be used as a school.

Time would fail to tell of all the struggles we had—of the many collections our friends made, and of the various other methods they adopted for raising the necessary funds—of our own great difficulties in getting the money together—of our gathering the requisite materials, and of the generous aid we secured for both places from the Directors of the Society and friends at home. Suffice it to say, that the difficulties were all overcome and the wherewithal to build was all provided, and in the course of time the churches were finished and dedicated to the worship and service of God amidst great rejoicings. The larger one was opened in December of the same year and the smaller in March of the year following. The plans for the latter were

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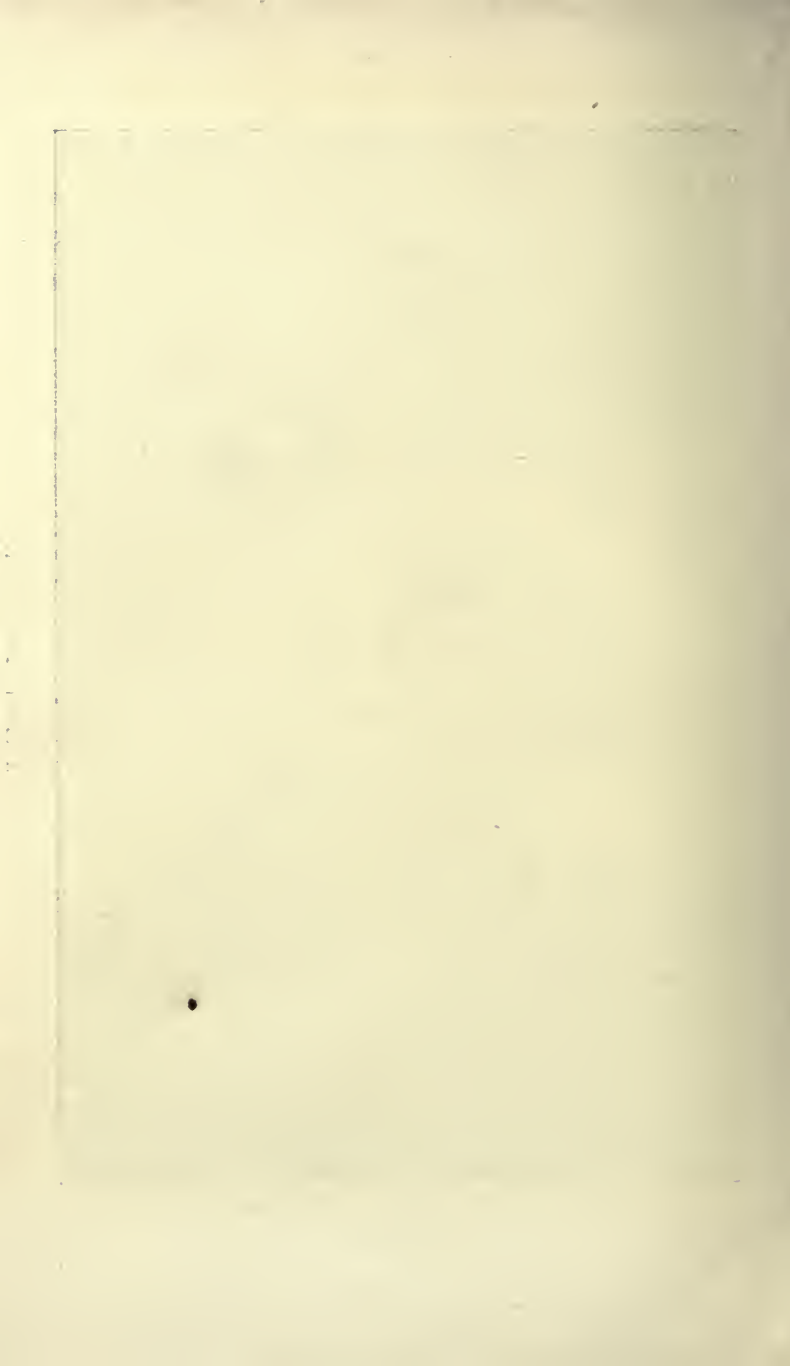
prepared by our brother, the Rev. J. Sibree, who had done so much for the erection of appropriate places of worship in Imèrina.

By this time I had begun to look forward to meeting Mrs. Houlder at the Cape, the Directors having kindly consented to my taking two holidays in one for the purpose. But before I left, the brethren in the capital, hearing that I sadly needed a change, were good enough to invite me up to attend the Union meetings and spend a few weeks amongst them. Moreover, I was anxious to make a personal effort to secure the services of some more teachers for the coast. So, in spite of the fact that March was one of the worst months of the year for travelling, I started, and, after visiting some of our congregations on the road, reached the capital on the twelfth day. The roads were in a dreadful condition—indeed they appeared to be worse than ever—and I was very tired on my arrival. But, after resting for a few days at the hospitable house of Mr. and Mrs. Wills, I was ready for what religious work and social pleasure might be before me.

It was certainly very agreeable, paying a round of visits to my generous friends and talking about the labours and experiences of old times and present-day prospects; and as for work, I had to go here and there giving what encouragement I could to all and sundry. They insisted on my preaching the Union sermon in Fàravòhitra Memorial Church. Then I assisted at a grand church opening in the country, at which the Prime Minister was present, and this again led to my taking the service at the Chapel Royal on the Sunday following. I had what we preachers call a good time there, feeling particularly free and unembarrassed; and



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after the sermon I took the liberty of pleading for the new Hova church at Tamatave, for which the people had made such great sacrifices. At the subsequent interview in the vestry, the good Queen, who was following so closely in the footsteps of her much-beloved predecessor, expressed warm sympathy, and said that she and the other members of the Palace Church would do what they could; but we must not expect very much as they had so many claims upon them. I thanked Her Majesty, and then left, and subsequently had the satisfaction of knowing that they had sent down the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars.

The event to be most remembered during my visit was the scene in connection with slavery which took place at the meeting of the Congregational Union of native churches at Ampàmarinana. The place was filled, as usual, with delegates from all parts, more than a thousand in number. When the devotional exercises were over, Mr. Standing, of the Friends' Foreign Association, stood up to read a paper. In the course of it he introduced the subject of slavery, and said that, as it was sometimes defended on the ground that the Jews of old held slaves, it would be well for the Malagasy to copy their example and release their bondsmen at the expiration of every seven years.

Instantly there was a tremendous roar of disapproval, and shouting, stamping and hissing all over the place, and the speaker tried in vain to proceed. At last he succeeded in making himself heard, and, assuring the audience that he had said all that he had intended to say on the subject, asked permission to finish his remaining sheet of paper. This was reluctantly given, and he brought his reading to a close. Then the native

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chairman judiciously gave out a hymn and called on the next speaker, one of the town pastors. There was a short discussion on the topic he introduced, and the excitement about slavery began again.

One of the judges, one of the best of them, who was sometimes called "the just judge," got up to make a defence of the institution. He was heard with enthusiastic shouts of approval and repeated clappings of hands on the part of the natives. But in the course of his remarks he maladroitly quoted our Lord's golden rule, "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." "That's exactly it," we called out at once, and began to applaud vigorously. The orator stopped and looked bewildered, not being conscious of any inconsistency, whilst his fellow countrymen shouted and clapped more heartily than ever.

Then our senior missionary rose to explain in a few words our position on this momentous, but very delicate, question. The noise, however, was so great that he could not get a word in, and he sat down again in despair. Now it seemed to me that it would be a shameful thing if the debate in that Christian assembly should end in such a way. So I stepped to the desk from my seat on the platform, and called out in a strong, clear voice, "Silence, please."

To our astonishment they gave it. Every voice was hushed and every hand was still. Why they were so silent I cannot to this day understand. Perhaps it was because they were startled, or because they saw an old friend come back again, although many knew his convictions on the subject. At any rate, silent they were. One could almost have heard a pin drop, as the people sat there in quiet expectancy, and then permitted me

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to say in two or three sentences that I was glad to be there that day, because (1) they had listened to some remarks on slavery ; (2) they had tried to defend slavery ; and (3) they had tried to defend slavery from the Scriptures ; and then I went on to express my conviction that as they had done this, they would not stop there, but would ultimately be convinced of the sin and injustice of slavery and release every bondsman as my own countrymen had done before them.

The silence continued for a moment or two after I had resumed my seat, and every one on the platform expected that the uproar would break out again. But another town pastor rose and suggested that perhaps we had better go on to the next subject on the paper. This was agreed to with acclamation, and our friend, as if to confirm the desire and ensure a total change, immediately gave out a well-known hymn.

Without doubt, slavery would have been abolished in Madagascar some time or other by the action of the people themselves, as we were beginning to have plenty of evidence of the way in which the Christian principle of equal justice between man and man was already working in their minds and hearts. But what a wonderful effect would have been produced on that assembly if someone had prophesied that within three short years every slave in the island would be free. Yet so it came to pass. Sometimes in the history of the world it would seem that the Almighty is not willing to wait whilst His people are slowly making up their minds to do their duty. He gives the privilege and the honour to others, or turns their purposes to the accomplishment of His own, thus making their selfishness and their wrath to praise Him. France did not attack Madagascar from

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altruistic and philanthropic motives. But when the conquest was complete, the abolition of slavery followed as a matter of course, and out of the evil came the good.

Almost as soon as I had returned to Tamatave our own six-monthly meetings were held, attended by many teachers and others from up and down the coast. These meetings involved a great deal of work of one sort and another. How I got through it I don't know ; for I had come back far from well and I was thoroughly knocked up when all was over, and the last teacher and delegate had gone. I had then to make arrangements for a longer absence, and to get on board the Castle liner, hoping that the sea air, away from the malarious coast, would soon set me right again, and that by the time we arrived in Cape Town I should be ready to meet my wife with a cheery countenance and a fair amount of health and strength.

I managed to keep up until the vessel started, and then collapsed, requiring the immediate attention of the doctor. He soon saw that I was seriously ill, and needed careful attention. I am afraid that I was a great trouble to the rest of the passengers, my cabin being too near the saloon ; and perhaps it was chiefly for that reason that they removed me to one on the lower deck. Here, however, two stewards were told off to do all that was required for my comfort and convenience. As one or another of these was always present I began to think that the time of my departure was probably close at hand ; and so, deeming it expedient to make what preparations I could, I dictated a final letter to my wife, mostly on business matters. I seemed calm and collected at the time, as I felt quite safe in God's hands

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and had no fears for my nearest and dearest ; but when the letter was opened some weeks afterwards, it was found to contain the veriest nonsense, showing that I must have been wandering in my mind.

Captains of ships are always averse to having a death on board if it can be avoided, and so, on the evening of the second day when we had arrived in the harbour of Port Louis, the order was given for one of the boats to be lowered and I was carried down into it and taken off to the hospital. This was about the best thing that could be done, as skilled attention was procured at once. But what a queer experience was awaiting me in this place. The Creole officials had a great difficulty in counting the money found on my person as I could not help them a bit. I had with me about £13 in English, French, and Malagasy currency. At last they managed it to their satisfaction and left me in bed in one of the wards. As the evening advanced I noticed a strong smell of tobacco, and, raising myself up a little, I saw to my astonishment that some of the patients were smoking in bed, which made me wonder what sort of place I had got into. However, I was not to remain long in that ward. Some of my friends, I gather, must have spoken to the chief physician, for I was speedily removed to a more private apartment, next to the dissecting room.

In this place I was well cared for, the doctor coming in frequently, and an assistant looking after me day and night. I fear I must have been a little difficult to nurse, as the assistant was changed at my request ; but really the Indian first given me had such objectionable ways that I could do nothing but think about them. He used to startle me by expectorating loudly, and

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afterwards I often found myself nervously watching for the premonitory symptoms of the attack. Then these helpers were rough, awkward fellows, and had little gumption about them. I was ordered bread and egg, for instance and as I could eat neither the man piled them up in a corner, where they remained for days.

I must have been very ill, for the report got about that my life was not worth a cent. Mr. McIrvine, the Presbyterian minister, came to see me and asked the doctor what hopes there were of my recovery. "None whatever," he said; "but stop; does he drink?" "No," was the reply, "he takes no liquor as a beverage."

"Well then, there's just a chance."

That chance saved me, and after a few days I turned the corner and began to fancy something to eat. One night, very late—indeed, I think it must have been after midnight, I happened to hear the chink of plates.

"What's that?" said I to the attendant. "Probably somebody having soup," he replied.

"Do you think you could get me any?" I asked, giving a rueful look at the dry bread piled up in the corner.

"I fear not," he answered; "but I'll go and try." And off he went. He came back in a little while with a plate of nice hot soup. That soup was delicious, and I sent him no less than three times to get some more. It did not occur either to him or me to wonder what the doctor would think of our proceedings. But I was a different man in the morning, and from that time I began rapidly to improve. In three or four days more I was well enough to be driven in a carriage up to Beau Bassin, where I stayed for a day or two, and then

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managed to get back and go on board the ship just before she left to continue her voyage to the Cape.

As it happened, the vessel had to return to Tamatave before proceeding direct to the South African ports, and when once more I appeared in the street, people came out of their houses to give me a hearty shake of the hand, as they never expected to see me again. The Christians had had prayers for me both in our own churches and in that of the Episcopalian mission.

In a few hours we were off again, and in due course we anchored at Cape Town after calling at Durban and other places. I received the usual hearty welcome from our friends in that place, and was specially indebted to the Revs. W. Forbes and James Good for kind hospitality, until the arrival of Mrs. Houlder and the other members of the missionary party about two weeks afterwards. How thankful we were for the meeting after the anxieties of the last few months, and how eagerly we looked forward to a fairly long period of united and happy service in Madagascar !

This hope was not destined to be realized. We had hardly got back into our house and settled down to work, before sinister rumours as to the intentions of the French began to disturb us and to unsettle everything in connection with the natives. Nothing could be properly carried on because of what might be coming to pass. The rumours increased and became more persistent as time went by. In the middle of September the news came that the Government of the Republic had determined to send a commissioner to make certain fresh demands, and to insist on the unqualified acceptance of a regular protectorate. The commissioner, M. Le Myre de Vilers, actually arrived by

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the mail of the 26th, and with the least possible delay started for the capital.

At this time I was going to and from the battery as usual, when occasion required that I should see the governor on matters connected with the church and school ; but it soon became advisable to abstain from paying any more visits, owing to the suspicions that were rife as to my relations with him and his officers. I was reported as being the governor's right-hand man who was constantly giving him advice as to the management of military affairs—the erection of fortifications and other matters of the kind being under my direction. I happened to be passing down to the beach one day when the French controller of customs turned round to a group of Hova officers and said, pointing me out to them, “ There goes your general. He is always setting you against us and telling the governor how to act.”

The charges were of course absurd. So were those, I reflected, that were brought against my predecessor, Mr. Shaw ; but they were believed nevertheless, and brought about most disastrous results. I determined therefore to try and meet them at once, so as to stop the spread of further prejudicial rumours. I went down to the French Resident, and asked him to bring me face to face with my principal accuser and have the matter thoroughly investigated. He agreed with me as to the danger of circulating such tales, said he did not credit them for a moment, and promised to call the man before him and administer a well-deserved rebuke. And there for a while the matter ended, though the rumours about my interference in Franco-Malagasy affairs were still current.

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There was great excitement in the town when the ships of war began to arrive one after another and take up their stations in the roadstead opposite the battery ; and not a little anxiety was manifested as to what might be the result of the negotiations. Everybody was on the watch for news.

On October 19, I received a telegram from the Rev. C. Jukes requesting me to buy paraffin if cheap. It really meant that the French subjects were leaving Antanànarivo—the explanation being that when he was passing through Tamatàve a short time previously he and I arranged a sort of private code by which we could inform each other of the occurrence of the most important events. We could not communicate openly, as the line was under the management of French officials. The consul could scarcely believe the news, as he had heard nothing from the vice-consul ; but it was soon confirmed by telegrams to others in the town, and a state of panic ensued. This was intensified a few days later, when official intelligence arrived of the breaking off of negotiations, and of the departure of the commissioner with the resident and the soldiers of the residency.

Great excitement prevailed and all was hurry and confusion. The Malagasy had already begun to leave and to send away their wives and children ; but many more now departed, and not a few of those that remained were busy trying to get rid of their houses and goods. What was the use of leaving them in the hands of others they said—they would only get stolen or burnt. The children of the schools were scattered, and the adults who assembled for public worship were very few in number. My sermon on the following Sunday was on David and Jonathan, showing the

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necessity as well as the propriety of faithfulness to one another in times of trouble.

Nor were the foreigners much less excited, although their lives would probably be in little danger. They feared more for their property, and many remembered the discomforts and privations of the former state of siege when the natives effectually blockaded the town and prevented the entrance of the necessary provisions. Taking time by the forelock they sent out for all sorts of things ; and numerous parties of men, women and children were seen bringing in fuel, cattle, poultry, rice, vegetables, fruit, and what not to enable them to make life more tolerable and less expensive during the coming trouble.

As the days passed by the excitement increased, especially when the news of the final rupture came. We began to dwell in the midst of local alarms. All sorts of rumours were flying about as to the supposed intention of the natives to fire the town ; stronger parties were landed from the ships, and better arrangements made for the protection of life and property.

The rumour about my helping the Hova governor had come to the ears of the French admiral, and as he had been speaking of it to the English consul, the latter advised me to write him a letter and give a categorical denial to the charge. Moreover, the admiral and his officers were strongly of opinion that we L.M.S. missionaries were inciting the Hovas to resist. I lost no time in writing but was not very hopeful of the denial being frankly accepted.

Soon the refugees from the surrounding districts and the interior began to appear, followed by M. Le Myre de Vilers and the late French resident at the capital

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and his escort. Then there came another period of anxious waiting. War was evidently inevitable, but when would it break out? Or would it after all be avoided by the Malagasy Government giving in? There was no sign of this, and more ships of war arrived and joined the others in the roadstead.

In the meanwhile the alarm amongst our native friends continued, and great distress prevailed. I went through the Hova town and found nearly three-quarters of the houses empty. The former occupants had fled and left them to their fate, although here and there some had been sold to venturesome buyers for sums of sixpence and upwards. Shortly afterwards a big fire broke out and burnt down almost all the houses in the place. In the Bètsimisàraka and other parts there was little change, most of the inhabitants being St. Marie or coast people intending to remain, as they expected protection from the French.

Whilst waiting for further developments, I took a careful inventory of the Society's property and that belonging to ourselves, and sent off as many books and school materials as possible to country teachers, it being quite uncertain how soon, or whether I should be able at all to visit them again. But this was finished long before anything more serious took place. At last the suspense of all sections of the community seemed about to be removed; for the Messageries Maritimes steamer *Peiho* came in crowded with troops. Nothing was done towards occupying the town, however, till the next Sunday, when the military authorities began landing stores. This was evidently to be the last time in which I should have the opportunity of conducting a service with our native friends before the formal outbreak of

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hostilities, and I hurried down to the large church and preached to the people who were present, mostly officers and soldiers, on Rev. xxii. 21, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," feeling assured that if that were so they would be strengthened and encouraged in the heavy trials that were before them. A very solemn impression prevailed. I was very much in earnest, and my heart was very heavy within me, fearing that I should never see many of them again.

A few more stores were landed on the Monday and then rumours were rife that the disembarkation of the troops had been stopped because the Malagasy Government had complied with the French terms. Tuesday was a most anxious day and we were all wondering what had really happened to cause the delay; but the morning of Wednesday, December 12, ended our suspense.

I went over to the consulate early and the clerk showed me a paper which notified the fact that the town would be occupied at 9.30. I went back to the house immediately. The governor and the garrison had just been seen going westwards followed by a great crowd of people. Mrs. Houlder was in tears, as some of our native friends had come to take a hasty farewell. A small tin box was hurriedly packed with the Society's money and some of our own valuables, and I put it on my head, and hastened down town to place it in safety at the house of our agents, Messrs. Porter, Aitken and Co.

As I plunged along in the deep sand I met the advance guard of the troops, who had already landed and were coming up the main street fully equipped for war. I had misread the notice of the occupation. It

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was 7.30 instead of 9.30. At the same time the ships' guns began firing on the battery as the admiral thought the Hovas had been reinforced and were intending to resist. I ran along and got our agents to take charge of the box and then hurried back again. By then the soldiers had reached the end of the street and were making way for a poor fellow who had been struck by a fragment of one of the shells. They were good enough, however, to let me through their ranks when I explained the situation to them. A little further on, I met one of our small school-girls being hurried along out of danger by her father and mother. It was very affecting to see them and bid them good-bye under such distressing circumstances. The people were fleeing west from all directions, men, women and children snatching up and taking along with them whatever they could easily carry.

I reached home safely, and my wife and I watched from the attic window the gradual approach of the troops. They came up in companies, and in front were skirmishers who looked into every house they came across, lest it should contain a hidden foe. There was no firing, however, and it seems they had orders not to fire unless they met with active resistance. We were touched to see two of the soldiers go into a hut, and bring out an old blind man and lead him within their lines to a position of safety. He was the pensioner of our little church, who used to be brought to service every Lord's day morning and then be presented with a small gratuity from the communion fund. Poor old fellow! he had been in great distress. He could not flee when everyone else was hastening away, and he did not expect that he would be thus kindly cared for.

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Shortly afterwards we were witnesses of another incident which might have had a very different ending. In the doorway of a house facing us, a little distance off, stood a Hova soldier with his gun in his hand, whose duty it had been to hurry up the stragglers. Why he delayed his own departure so long was a mystery ; but he appeared quite unconcerned, and did not seem to be aware of the French soldiers who were coming up on both sides of the compound in front. Seeing his danger I called out loudly, "Go"; when he started, and then turned and scampered off like a hare. Another moment and the men, seeing him rifle in hand, would probably have fired and his life might have been taken. But they let him run and pursued their investigations. Now I suppose that I ought to have kept perfectly quiet and been a silent witness of the impending tragedy ; but the impulse to save the poor fellow was too much for me. Had there been time to think, I should not, of course, have uttered a single word.

The invaders burst through our hedge and searched our out-houses as they did the other places, and this gave occasion to a curious episode. I was still upstairs watching the progress of events, when I suddenly became conscious of a great hubbub going on below. Running downstairs I found the passage full of soldiers, and my good wife in the middle of them. It was some time before I could get a word in as they were all talking fast together. At length, in answer to my repeated question "What do you want?" a little fellow who seemed to have most to say, answered "We want him." "Who's 'him'?" I asked again. "Why, the man that ran upstairs," was the response. Then I assured them that there was no man who had run upstairs ; and, as

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they still affirmed that there was, I invited them to search around with me, to see if he could be found. They consented, and we all went upstairs. We looked into the attic, but he wasn't there ; we examined the bedrooms, but he wasn't there ; we went around the verandah, but he wasn't there. Then we descended to the lower floor and searched the dining-room, sitting-room, and store-room, but he wasn't in any of these. I thereupon asked the men whether they would like to look into the cellar, when they began to get angry, as they thought I was poking fun at them ; which perhaps was partially true, as I was somewhat annoyed by their pertinacity. " Oh," said the little man who had previously been so loquacious, " he is here somewhere." " Perhaps," I replied, lifting up my eyebrows, spreading out my hands and shrugging my shoulders, after their own fashion. " Search again, my friends."

Now I should not have been quite so much at my ease if I had known the truth. There really was a man who had run up the stairs, and as it turned out he was actually in the house at the time. I went up again some two hours afterwards, and whilst engaged in looking at something out of the front bedroom window I was startled to hear a voice say " Master." I looked round, and there was a woolly head just coming from under the bed. The room had been full of us, and strange to say not one had thought to look there, probably because there were no valances tied around.

It was the husband of our washerwoman who had come up in search of his wife. We had told him she had run away with the other women, and said that perhaps she might be in hiding near at hand ; he had better look around. Whilst he was searching for the

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lady the French soldiers saw him, and, thinking that perhaps he was a spy, they made for him, when he bolted up the back steps and disappeared in the house. I assured him that the soldiers would not be likely to hurt him if he gave them no occasion for suspicion, and advised him to stay where he was until the darkness gave him an opportunity of escape—advice which he was only too glad to follow.

As the evening drew on my mind reverted to the former experience of the French soldiers with the contents of Mr. Shaw's bottles. It was a fearfully hot day and the men were literally parched with thirst. They came around in crowds begging for water, and I was only too pleased to let them drink from the tanks to their hearts' content. Unhappily others did not know of their existence, or preferred a stronger liquor which they found in various houses in the town.

Again, some were hungry and took a fancy to our two calves which were in the pen with their mothers. The cow-boy, Boto, had been the only helper who had not fled. One of these fellows, on being expostulated with, was very impudent, and said that they had been without a good dinner long enough and thought they would like veal for a change. When, later on in the evening, they actually stole a calf, I went to complain to the superior officer; but was glad to get back again safe and sound, as many of the men were drunk with the rum they had taken, and were inclined to be troublesome.

The next morning I was honoured by a visit from Admiral Bien-Aimé, who had come up to view the position on the outskirts of the town to enable him to make the best arrangements for its defence. He was

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very affable and friendly, and in answer to my enquiry as to why he had taken notice of the stupid accusation that I was acting as military adviser of the Hova governor, he said that he was bound to consider all statements of that sort laid before him, though it did not necessarily follow that he believed that there was anything in them. But he made no further remark, and I could not understand what his real sentiments were.

On the following morning I was sent for to headquarters, and I went with a certain amount of trepidation, as I feared that the malice and suspicions of my accusers might, after all, bring about some evil result. I was relieved when the admiral, who was as courteous and friendly as before, said " I am sorry, Mr. Houlder, but we have decided to occupy your house and in accordance with the rules of war you must give it up." Now I partly expected this, as I had heard a rumour of it the day before. But I declared my inability to comply immediately with the request, because I had not secured another house and had no men to remove my goods. " Oh," said he, " that is easily settled. We can find you another place and men to help you remove." Then calling a lieutenant of marines, he gave the order, " Take a corvée of men and assist this gentleman to remove his goods." There was nothing for it but to thank him for his courtesy, and to accept the inevitable and retire outside. The officer soon reappeared with a dozen men, and then he and I, putting ourselves at their head, began the march up the main street.

What a spectacle ! Whoever would have thought that I should be leading a detachment of French sailors

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to turn myself out of house and home? No wonder that the people along the street could not make it out, and that a wag amongst my own countrymen called out, "Hullo friend! Whither bound? Are you off to take the Hova camp?" I had already concluded that, as our people had been scattered and the state of siege had commenced—to last probably a considerable time—it would be better not to attempt to stay in the town, but to get away as soon as convenient. I therefore asked the lieutenant to assist us to remove the furniture into the church, to be taken away from there again when arrangements had been made to dispose of it by public auction. So on arriving at the house, to the utter astonishment of my wife, the process of removal began.

The men worked with a will, and could not have been more careful if the things had been their own. In an hour or two everything was out and placed in the adjoining building, the church. We felt constrained to offer the kind-hearted fellows what we had to eat and drink before they went away, but they courteously refused, and said they were sorry to have to put us to so much inconvenience. So we parted great friends, and, when all was secure, we went down to the house of Messrs. Procter Bros., where the manager, Mr. T. Waterhouse had invited us to take refuge, until we could finish up our business and get on board the incoming mail.

The packing up and the removal of the goods to our own agents was a great task, as porters were few, and very hard to get, everything being so disorganized. But it was accomplished at last, and in a few days the sale took place and we were free to depart.

In the meantime the military authorities had not

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forgotten my complaint about the theft of the calf. Just before the mail came in I was sent for to confront one of the soldiers who had been found cooking veal on the night of the occupation. It was a little difficult to understand the officer who had the affair in hand, and still more difficult, perhaps, for him to understand me. The principal thing, however, was to say whether the prisoner had been seen about the cattle-pen on the night in question. I was doubtful about it, and could not give a decided answer ; whereupon the man was released from custody. But as he turned to go, and I saw him in another position, it came to my mind clearly enough that he was no other than the saucy, impudent fellow who had told me that he fancied veal for his dinner. There was no doubt about it, and it was lucky for him perhaps that I felt no desire to pursue the matter further.

We went on board the *Peiho* on December 27. It was a sorrowful departure ; only a few short months before we had landed from the English ship thankful for the opportunity of recommencing work together, and looking forward with hopefulness to a further term of united service amongst our native friends. Alas, it was not to be. We were bound once more for home, and the poor folks, we knew not what was to befall them.

In due time we arrived and received a very sympathetic welcome from the Directors, who entirely approved of the step we had taken in retiring for a time from our station and coming back to England to wait the course of events.

CHAPTER XII

TAMATAVE—THE LAST STAGE

AT home by the aid of the newspapers we anxiously watched the progress of events in the far-off land—the gathering of French troops at Mojangà—their difficulties and sufferings in the fever-stricken lowlands—the gradual advance up country—the feeble attempts at resistance—the ill-supported and jealously-obstructed efforts made by the foreign officers to put life and spirit into the natives and properly to conduct the defence—the starting of the flying column—its rapid advance—the final rush on the capital—with a very small force much reduced by disease and encumbered with sick. Then the bold attack—the farcical defence when the place was full of troops, who might easily have overwhelmed the weak invading force—and the sudden surrender by the Queen's command out of sheer compassion for her betrayed and suffering people.

That was the end of the playing at soldiers—of the vainglorious determination to form an irresistible modern army, inaugurated by the bringing up of the Armstrong gun and the magnificent reception of the English sergeant, signalized by the blowing of trumpets, the beating of drums and the booming of cannon. That was the finish of the perpetual swearing of allegiance and undying devotion, and the constant declaration

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at all the grand assemblies that every man would give his life rather than suffer the enemy to tread one step on the sacred soil of Imèrina, of which not one thumb's breadth should be given up. Oh ! it was pitiful. How could we help thinking of the words "How are the mighty fallen and the weapons of war perished !" Better would it have been not to have fought at all than to have made such a miserable show of fatuous imbecility.

Then there were the after events—the exile of the Prime Minister—the breaking out of rebellion, carried on by the most ignorant and heathenish part of the population—the burning of hundreds of churches and the attacks on the missionaries and their adherents—soon to be followed by stern repression and the senseless persecution of the Protestants. All these things had a powerful influence on our minds and made us long to be back again to render what assistance we could to the people in the altered condition of affairs.

When the country had thus settled down, however, and there appeared a fair chance of labouring uninterruptedly for the good of the people, it was deemed advisable that I should go out alone once more to prepare the way for the arrival of my wife, as she had suffered much from the climate and it was feared that there would be some considerable delay in getting possession of the mission-house which was still in the occupation of the French. Accordingly I embarked on the *Grantully Castle* towards the latter end of May, 1896, and began what proved to be an interesting, if not an altogether pleasant voyage.

The passage out to the Cape was made in fairly good weather and the days passed happily enough, varied

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as they were by a trip ashore at Madeira, and the usual round of week-day distractions and Sabbath services ; but when we reached the Cape there was something else to think about. As we steamed towards the docks a boat put out and someone in it shouted out the news " The *Drummond* has gone down and only three persons saved." Alas ! this was confirmed when the port officers came on board and silently passed round the newspapers. Consternation sat on every face and gloom settled on officers and crew alike, many of whom had shipmates in the ill-fated vessel. Our table steward, a very smart bright fellow, disappeared for a while. No wonder, for his only brother was amongst the drowned. What an awful scene it must have been just after that last dinner and the rejoicings at the prospect of the successful termination of the voyage such as we had recently been having ourselves.

There was intense excitement in the town. All the flags were half-mast high, and everybody was talking of the sad event. Our own ship had passed very near to the rocks at Ushant on which the *Drummond* was wrecked, but it was during the day and the sun was shining brightly on the rugged coast. I remembered that at the time I could not help thinking of its extremely dangerous character and that all vessels ought to give it a very wide berth. Little did I imagine later on that the fine steamer we saw somewhere near Madeira would meet her fate on that very spot, and all for the sake of saving a few extra hours in the length of the voyage.

Touching at Port Elizabeth and East London we arrived in due course at Durban, where we transhipped into the *Garth Castle* bound to Madagascar *via* Delagoa

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Bay and Beira. The explanation was that the vessel was chartered to take up to the latter port, if necessary, some four hundred troops, mostly men of the York and Lancaster regiment, *en route* for Mauritius. They were in charge of Captain Haynes whose wife was one of the daughters of our friend the Rev. Mr. McIrvine of that island. At his request I conducted a short service on board for their benefit, closing with a fervent prayer commending them to the God of battles.

The soldiers were a fine body of men, and they looked the picture of health in their tropical helmets and khaki uniforms as they were paraded on deck just before their departure. They were most anxious to be off to the Mashona war, and some of the non-commissioned officers, whose names had not been included in the list, offered to go as privates if only their superiors would permit them. It was a very animated sight as they formed up on deck in full marching order, and then filed down the ladder to pack themselves closely into the barges alongside. They sang "Auld Lang Syne," and cheered again and again as the tug towed them away; whilst we on board responded heartily with voices, handkerchiefs and caps, one of the stewards varying the scene by thrusting out of a porthole a broom with a towel tied to the head of it. Poor fellows, they would have trials enough, and the wives and children, from whom some of them had just parted, were full of dark forebodings as to what would happen to them in the land of the savages. Strange to say the only one who met his death in Mashonaland was the good captain who was so solicitous for the welfare of his men. By July 6 we were fairly away, steaming across the Mozambique Channel for the southern coast of Madagascar, and on

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the day following we made Fort Dauphin, where the first French settlement was established many years before.

In two more days we arrived at Vatomàndy and the morning after reached Tamatàve, where once more I received a hearty welcome from native and foreign friends. There was no getting into the mission-house, however. It was still in the possession of the military authorities, and a request that it should be given up had been ignored. There was no personal feeling against me. On the contrary the officials were very courteous, and, in a notice of my arrival in one of the papers published in the town, I was referred to as the missionary who had been good enough to give a friendly and impartial account of the occupation of the place when the war began.

Our first Sabbath in Tamatàve was a very strange one. The friends who were going into the interior spent most of the day preparing for their journey, whilst I looked round to see what could be done. There were no services whatever. A few of the native Christians had tried to get up a weekly meeting in one of their houses, as both the churches were still used by the military. But the attempt had been given up because of their being interfered with by rowdy black and white soldiers who came in and pulled them about. There did not appear to be much control exercised over these men. They did pretty much as they pleased with the natives, who were too timid to attempt any resistance or make any complaint. It was only when the outrage was more unbearable than usual, that they plucked up courage to appear before the French officials with their tale of woe; when, as a rule, the affair was looked into and the guilty parties punished.

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During the week that followed I found some of our scattered sheep and arranged a meeting in the house of Ràinijàfy, the former pastor of the smaller church in our own grounds. There were more than we expected—some forty or fifty in number. We had a nice little service, both morning and afternoon, and had some talk about the reorganization of the work. At the afternoon gathering some Algerian and Senegalese soldiers looked in, perhaps more out of curiosity than anything else, and seeing me there they made no attempt at disturbance. One must say, too, in justice to them, that afterwards, when these fellows really understood that what was going on was a religious service, they generally conducted themselves properly.

I lodged for a time at the house of Messrs. Procter Bros., during which another attempt was made to get possession of the mission-house ; but when I was finally informed that it could not then be restored, I proceeded at once to seek another place. The only building available, that gave any promise of being at all suitable, was a ramshackle erection of three small rooms on one floor, made of rough timbers with the outside walls of interlaced split bamboo, and the inside walls of wood from old boxes, and a roof of corrugated iron, without any ceiling underneath. It was naturally dubbed "Packing Case House." For this tropical mansion we had to pay £6 per month.

Happily there was staying in the town awaiting instructions from home the Rev. A. W. Wilson of the Antsihànaka mission, who kindly consented to share lodgings with me. We soon moved into the house and set to work to make the place as habitable as possible. One end room served for a bedroom, and the other had

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to do duty for a store room, lumber room, and pantry ; whilst the middle apartment, the place of many openings, was reserved for dining room, study, sitting room, and general purposes. We had the missing door put in, hung up a couple more to shut off the two end rooms ; then lined the bed room with rofia cloth and tacked up a few pictures from the illustrated papers and magazines to adorn the central apartment. For furniture we contented ourselves with a bedstead, a stretcher, a few chairs, a table ; and we had various cupboards and shelves made out of the large packing cases which contained some of the things brought from home. Then with a rough sort of hut outside for a kitchen, we were ready for housekeeping under difficulties inside, and what work we could accomplish amongst the people outside.

The first thing to be done was the setting up of some kind of a building to serve as a temporary church and school-house. Materials were soon procured—small branches of trees and thick sticks for the frame, boards for the floor, and bamboos and leaves for the sides and roof—and a fairly comfortable place was erected, native fashion. Here a few scholars were taught on week-days and regular services carried on every Sabbath. Mr. Wilson undertook to look after the school, whilst I spent most of my time visiting about amongst the people and trying to get other scholars. In this latter business we had not the assistance of the local governor as formerly ; for circumstances had entirely changed, and as yet there was no system of compulsory education. A native governor had indeed been appointed, but he had only the shadow of power, and what little of that he possessed he was afraid to exercise in an educational

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direction. So, going to school as well as attending church was a purely voluntary business, carried on under most discouraging circumstances.

Nothing could be done for the country districts as they were also in a disorganized condition, and no teacher could be readily found to take up any work. We were to devote our attention to the town alone, and ere long, alas, we were forced to give up that. The fact was that the insanitary conditions under which we lived, coupled with arduous labour in that fever-stricken place, was interfering very seriously with my health. The house was draughty and fearfully hot under the corrugated iron roof, and the water we had to drink was very bad. The water had always been a difficulty. To the mission-house from which we were excluded were attached two large tanks, but even these did not invariably secure pure water. They had not been in use very long before their contents tasted nastily, and on examination we discovered fully three-quarters of an inch of sediment at the bottom composed of the decaying bodies of myriads of lady-birds, mosquitoes, flies, and other insects washed down from the roof which they had visited in swarms. There was no mistake afterwards about keeping the tanks clean—they were washed out at very frequent intervals. But here we had no tanks at all and were obliged to content ourselves with water pumped up from the bad soil, which stank after it had been standing a short time. I think, also, that I did too much tramping about in the deep loose sand under the burning sun, to try and recover the scattered members of our flock. I was taken ill and had to have the constant assistance of the doctor. I was on the way to recovery, however, in a

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few weeks, and then had a bad relapse which caused my friends to fear the worst.

But for the skill of the physician and the kind care and unremitting attention of Mr. Wilson, who was indeed a brother in adversity, the illness would probably have had a fatal ending. As it was, it left me utterly weak and prostrate, and an immediate voyage to Réunion was advised that I might seek a thorough recovery at one or both of the sanatoria in the mountains. Arrangements were accordingly made, and Mr. Wilson took me over to that island. He remained five days with me at St. Denis and then, as his own mission was for a time broken up, he left for England at the request of the Directors.

The hotel in which I stayed was the same that gave the family accommodation after that dreadful experience on the bullocker *Isaure*, in 1881, and my mind was full of memories of what we endured during that most trying voyage, and of what we subsequently suffered at the hands of the Bourbonnais boatmen and the officers of the mail, when at the quay, and on the short passage to Mauritius. Happily there was no chance of further trouble of that sort, as the opening of the docks at Pointe des Galets afforded passengers immediate access to vessels.

After Mr. Wilson had left I went by road and diligence to Salazie, a picturesque place amongst the mountains, some 3,500 feet above the sea level. Here I consulted a doctor and stayed several weeks before going on to Cilaos, a place on the other side of the island about 1,500 feet higher, so as to get the benefit of the hot baths impregnated with iron.

The hotel at Salazie was a fairly good one and the

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meals were nicely cooked, but little care was taken in making proper provision for rest and sleep—no mosquito netting being provided. The consequence was, I had some wretched sleepless nights, which undid to some extent what the conveniences and amenities of the day accomplished. Still I got on tolerably well, made some progress, and much enjoyed the society and friendship of the British consul and one or two acquaintances from Mauritius. Especially was this so as regards a cup, or rather a bowl, of tea—a thing for which I longed, as the proprietress of the hotel was utterly incapable of making one.

Whilst in the place, I visited, of course, the pretty cemetery where so many seekers after health had been laid. I was more than interested in the grave of my friend Mr. Hewlett, from whom I had parted several years ago in the hope that a sojourn for a while in this place would restore him to health and strength. Alas ! it was not to be. The fever had made too serious an inroad upon his constitution, and he gradually sank till his gentle spirit passed quietly away. It is no wonder that as I stood bareheaded there the thought crossed my mind that possibly my own body might be laid at his side. It was pleasant to reflect that although our theological and ecclesiastical views were far apart, and in carrying on our duties it was exceedingly difficult to avoid disputes, yet we never had a misunderstanding nor exchanged an unfriendly word. And the same must be said of his successor, the Rev. James Coles, who did for me many a deed of brotherly kindness.

The journey to Cilaos was a very tedious affair. I had to go down to St. Denis again, and after a day there, take the next morning a slow railway journey of

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four hours to St. Louis, where I spent the night, though I did not sleep a wink. There was of course a bed provided in the only hotel I could stay at, but it was verminous, and the mosquito-curtains were in holes so that it was almost useless. I reclined, therefore, on my deck chair and waited hour after hour for the morning, and then waited long for breakfast. Afterwards with gladness I mounted a gig which took me to a place in the mountains where it was impossible for a wheeled vehicle to proceed further. There a chair was in waiting, and in this porters carried me up an awful gorge, and then in and out and up and down the mountains to the place for which we were bound in the crater of an extinct volcano, over 5,000 feet above sea level.

Here I put up at a small establishment which was one-third farm house, one-third shop—a baker's and Chandler's—and one-third hotel. They gave me a small hut to occupy which was by its side, and into this all the meals were carried. I found it a bit uncomfortable, and although the food was good, it was rough and served up in an uncleanly fashion. I endured it for a time, but as there is no sense in putting up with unpleasant and uncomfortable things, if they can be avoided, I tried for an alteration. The lid of the china sugar basin was sent out to be washed, as it was covered with fly marks, apparently months old. That was done, but the good woman did not clean the inside. After looking at that for a day or two I tipped the sugar into a plate and converted the receptacle into a slop basin. The hint was duly taken and both inside and outside became clean.

The next thing was the bed, which was most uncomfortable. Complaints produced no alleviation. So one

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morning I removed the straw mattress and found that a couple of the boards were missing, and another broken. I searched about for the wherewithal to repair it, came upon some boards and then, borrowing a saw, I went at it. But I soon had the proprietor after me. I was cutting up some boards he was reserving for a new house. However, he was very good, and, being afraid I should over-tire myself, he called a carpenter and had the thing done properly, and I duly appreciated the change when the night came and I laid down on the more comfortable bed.

The hot baths were a great boon, though for a time they did not seem to do much good. But my body was immersed for an hour or so every day for nearly three weeks, and I doubtless derived considerable benefit therefrom. At any rate I was much improved at the expiration of that time.

The return voyage was of course less trying than the outward experience, and on my arrival at Tamatave I found the house all right and everything much as it had been left. But I must say I was very doubtful whether I should be able to hold out during the bad season which was just coming on. I was prepared, however, to stay and do my best, and should gladly have done so, had it not been for letters received from friends in the capital urging me not to take any unnecessary risks. Then there was the very natural appeal from Mrs. Houlder, who was fearful of what a continued residence at this unhealthy place might mean, not only to her husband, but also to herself and the children. Lastly, there came also a very kind letter from the senior foreign secretary of the Society to the same effect. The part that impressed me most were the words, "The

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apparent prospects of work in Tamatave and the state of affairs in Madagascar do not seem at all to justify such risks as you would run in endeavouring to hold out at your post in an enfeebled state of health." Still I hesitated long before coming to the conclusion that I really ought to go, and I began reluctantly to prepare for departure.

There was little to be done in settling up the affairs of the mission. We had not been able to send either teachers or evangelists to any other places on the coast, and the work in the town had only just been recommenced. The native converts there, moreover, had regained confidence. They had a tolerably comfortable temporary building which could be used for religious purposes; and just before I went away the mission premises were finally given up by the French military authorities, and our friends would be able to worship in our own pretty little church without fear of being disturbed by curious and rowdy foreigners.

The steamer left on December 26, and touched as usual at St. Marie and Diègo Suarez. I had no desire to go on shore at the latter place, as there was no one particular to see and the memory of my former experience of sickness was decidedly unpleasant. I made an attempt to land, however, at Mojangà, on the other side of the island. Soon after the vessel stopped she was approached by lighters and small craft of all kinds, which fastened themselves to the ship by the aid of ropes. Into one of these I stepped, to be taken ashore by the Indian boatmen. They waited, however, for one or two more passengers. Whilst doing so, the vessel was put on the move again to get in a little nearer. This occasioned a rush of the different craft through the



THE COLLISION AT MOJANGÀ.

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water, and ours was run on to a larger one which happened to be in the way. The two Indians scrambled on to it, as the bow of our boat went up and the stern went down ; whilst I, being seated in the latter part, was in danger of being pitched into the water and carried away in the race. But, seeing a couple of ropes above my head, I seized them and got a good firm grip, though as they slacked a bit I was half in and half out of the water. My helmet was knocked off, but still I held on tightly to the ropes. There was a shout and a cry of " Don't budge " from the quartermaster, as he raced down the ladder ; and then he and another pulled on the ropes until they could reach me, when I was hauled up, tolerably wet, but not otherwise any the worse for my adventure.

Nothing else of particular interest occurred during the voyage ; and in due course I arrived at home, where I was received with heartfelt thankfulness by the members of the family, who, after the anxieties of the preceding months, were only too glad to see me back again. The welcome of the Directors was scarcely less hearty. They were very sympathetic, both as regards my recent illness and our disappointed hopes, and said that I had done entirely right in running no more risks in the fever land. A period of service in connection with deputation work followed, and then I was put on another list and became a " retired missionary " of the Society.

Since then my dear wife has passed away. Had I been able to continue my work at Tamatave it is certain that she would not have been well enough to join me ; and if she had made the venture, she would not have continued to be my helpmate for a lengthened period.

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She never really recovered from her repeated attacks of fever, and after suffering severely for many months she died on September 22, 1904, at Harrold, in Bedfordshire, whither she had been taken in the hope that the country air would give her a chance of recovery.

Hers was a strenuous life nobly lived in unselfish and continuous service of all she loved. Faithful and true, and untiringly devoted to every good work, we deemed it not unseemly to have placed over her grave the words

“ She hath done what she could.”

Years have elapsed since my leaving Madagascar, and I have often wished that I could return and again join in the happy work of preaching the Gospel to the natives, whilst my deepest sympathy has gone out to them in all the sorrows and trials through which they have passed. There has certainly been much to discourage and depress ; but, on the other hand, cause for encouragement and hope has not been wanting. God has been with them as He was with their fathers in the former dark days of persecution. Their courage has not failed, their faith is still firm, and the prospect of ultimate victory is as bright as the morning sun. And so if one cannot go himself to assist in hastening the coming of that glorious day, he can at least pray that God in His goodness will from time to time send others, that His own wise and gracious purpose in the salvation and regeneration of men may be finally accomplished.

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